

**THE INFLUENCE OF NATIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
ON INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
UNIVERSITIES IN SAUDI ARABIA**

NASIEM MOHAMMED ALYAMI

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Declaration

I declare that I have not, whilst being registered for the PhD programme in Manchester Metropolitan University, been a registered candidate for another award of a university.

The material in the thesis has not been used in any other submissions for an academic award.

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Abstract

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been increasingly adopted among many organisations since its inception in the 1990s due to its positive impact on their marketing strategies. One particular characteristic is IMC's unique relationship with organisational culture. However, although IMC has been explored in depth in terms of organisational culture in Western settings, its implementation across the Arab world is rarely reported, despite the significant impact of national culture on Arab nations' organisational culture. More specifically, although the implementation of IMC in higher education has been reported as having a positive impact on brands and performance in such settings, the shifting nature of organisational culture in higher education institutions due to the prevailing Arab national culture, alongside the need to maintain organisational growth among public and more importantly private universities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), could offer important insight into emerging organisational changes among Arab countries.

Correspondingly, there is a research gap in relation to how public and private universities design, adopt and implement IMC strategy. It is also of particular importance to explore private universities' resistance to national culture. Moreover, there is a need to understand how to navigate organisational growth via IMC through adopting an organisational structure that facilitates improved flexibility, staff independence and control in countries such as the KSA that feature distinct national and organisational cultures. To fill this gap, the present study conducts qualitative research to explore the consequence of national and organisational culture on the development and implementation of IMC in two public and two private universities in the KSA. Furthermore, analyses are carried out to determine how national culture influences organisational culture in these two different organisational contexts, including consideration of the hierarchical organisational structure of public universities that leads to lengthy approval processes, and local male staff dominating the leadership positions. The findings from this study are grouped into three thematic categories: organisational characteristics, organisational flexibility, and the selection of media. These thematic categories are then further divided into ten sub-themes: control and power, organisational structure, organisational objectives, rituals and routines, reward structure, context of leadership, segregation, budget flexibility, capacity and resources, and media objectives.

In terms of organisational characteristics, the findings emerging from this study indicate that the existence of stronger functional power and flexibility among the KSA's private universities regarding marketing communication decision-making arises from a political choice. This choice offers resistance to national culture in terms of marketing communication decision-making when compared to the public universities, although nuances existed among the private universities in terms of the size and the number of courses offered. Due to the organisational structure of the public relations (PR) departments in the private universities, they had more active marketing communication with a functional structure similar to a market structure. In contrast, similar PR activities in the public universities comprised student affairs, community services, and PR and media, which tended to overshadow the marketing functions due to the taller organisational structure, leading to delays in decision-making.

The KSA's public universities demonstrated stronger links to high-context culture as a consequence of the power distance index when compared to the low-context culture

observed in the private universities, as a consequence of dilution from the power distance culture. These nuances signify a relationship with the restricted organisational flexibility and budgetary control characterised by the public universities in the KSA when compared to their private counterparts. Other findings from the themes indicated that the market-driven private universities tended to invest in technology, human capital, and the overall university marketing infrastructure such as websites, in order to enable competitive economic performance in spite of being under the same national culture as the government-funded public universities. On the other hand, spending on e-marketing, advertising and PR in the public universities had fixed budgetary constraints, prompted by the non-profit-driven public university system and the aim of meeting the needs of local students. Comparable differences existed in the increased funding allocation for marketing communications due to the renewed efforts to internationalise the activities of each private university in terms of the overall global ranking.

In terms of competency and segregation, increased numbers of different nationalities among the staff and female leadership appeared to be favoured in the private universities compared to their public counterparts, which the latter were predominantly male-dominated in leadership and predominately staffed by Saudi nationals. This phenomenon was more pronounced in the PR departments of the public universities, where women worked in isolation due to the influence of national culture that promotes patriarchy in the KSA. The Saudization policy, which is intended to ensure Saudi nationals are prioritised in recruitment, and particularly in leadership positions, was observed in the public universities, although regional nationalities appeared among the leadership of such universities from neighbouring countries including Egypt, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates. In comparison the leadership in the private universities was characterised by more diverse composition from the United Kingdom, United States and Canada, which this study considers as dilution to the national Saudization strategy influenced by the national culture.

Budgetary approval for the private universities occurred on an annual basis, providing flexibility for planning effective marketing strategies when compared to the public sector, where the budgets needed to be approved for individual events that affected decision-making and effectiveness across marketing events. Furthermore, the public universities tended to outsource their social media marketing due to a lack of in-house expertise.

The implications of the findings emerging from this study, in particular how Saudi national culture has influenced IMC in public universities compared to private universities, and how organisational structure and leadership have favoured gender segregation within units responsible for IMC to a greater extent in public universities compared to their private counterparts due to national culture, provide a unique perspective on the growth of IMC strategies within the context of the KSA. Moreover, the nuances identified among the private and public universities, revealing dissimilar strategies and practice, have further illustrated variations among private–private and public–public universities in the KSA.

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List of Abbreviations

HE	higher education
HEI	higher education institution
IMC	integrated marketing communication
IT	information technology
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
PR	public relations

Chapter 1

Research Introduction

1.1 Background

The impact of national culture on organisational culture has been extensively researched in myriad domains, including its impact on organisational values (Hofstede, 1985), the development of trust, and collective behaviour and perceptions (Strauß et al., 2021). Growing competition among organisations has continued to underscore the importance of integrated marketing communication (IMC) as a means to achieve organisational performance (Porcu et al., 2017). Meanwhile, in his US-based study of IMC involving senior marketing managers, Low (2000) identifies market share growth to have resulted from an increased requirement for organisational productivity, as well as the value of media revenues and the continued relevance of online advertisements. From the customer perspective, IMC has been widely researched (Valos et al., 2016; Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017; Finne and Grönroos, 2017; Porcu et al., 2020).

Among the many sectors to have considered IMC, higher education (HE) has been identified as benefitting from IMC within the context of brand identity, reputation, and image, particularly in the two United Kingdom (UK) universities explored by Foroudi et al. (2017), and within the UK and New Zealand contexts in terms of IMC for situation-specific applications among organisations (Eagle et al., 2007), while IMC was found to be a taught subject in United States (US), UK, New Zealand, Australian, Taiwanese, and Korean universities (Kerr et al., 2008). However, one less common region for such study and practice is the Middle East, in part due to the evolving nature of IMC and its national culture being high context in nature.

HE in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has received significant scholarly attention due to the relevance of education in the Kingdom (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Issa et al., 2021; Essa and Harvey, 2022), both in the government-funded public sector, and the emerging profit-driven private sector. Such higher educational environments have benefited from a number of technological approaches to university marketing and

recruitment, although national culture continues to shape public sector HE, with marketing communication having been utilised previously in sports among the Gulf nations (e.g., the KSA) (Turner, 2017). However, national cultural practices continue to prevail in the KSA's public higher education institutions (HEIs), while the KSA's private HEIs have been able to pursue organisational strategies that could be seen as a dilution of the national culture, in order to maintain growth while remaining within the regulatory guidelines (i.e., the Ministry of Education). Therefore, understanding IMC practices within the context of organisational and national culture's influence could provide a new dimension for HE marketing communications. The next section considers the study context in terms of the KSA, HE in the KSA, and national culture, organisational culture and IMC.

1.2 Context of the study

1.2.1 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The KSA is one of the most powerful and largest countries in the Gulf region (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020), with an area of approximately 250,000 km² (see Figure 1-1). In the last 20 years, the HE sector in the KSA has witnessed remarkable development due to the influence of the King's policies embracing digital transformation initiatives in an effort to enhance educational effectiveness and improve business efficiency, alongside the additional competitive pressures introduced by private universities.



Figure 1-1: Map of the KSA (Vectorstock, 2022)

According to the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, Saudi universities offer international scholarships and international student engagement to increase the diversified culture and enhance educational standards (Lefdahl-Davis et al., 2015; Almutairi, 2020). Moreover, Saudi universities have recently placed greater focus on webinars, seminars, community programmes, consultations, symposia, conferences, and group meetings (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Hassounah et al., 2020), which have increased the importance of utilising IMC strategies to gain organisational success. Meanwhile, the national culture of the KSA has been considered to have strong linkage to power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007), and thus due to the increased need for IMC strategies, the national culture of the KSA could provide new insight into how IMC implementation could be achieved in that national context. Having presented the national context, the following section considers the nature of HE in the KSA.

1.2.2 Higher education in the KSA

HE in the KSA is considered one of the most important sectors due to its strategic role in providing education to the citizens, and also due to the cultural and religious relevance of education as a means of societal development. The country has continued to expand the HE sector in both public and private settings, with 29 public and 38 private universities to date (Ministry of Education, 2022), which are regulated by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The Ministry of Higher Education is the main authority for all universities and must certify that each of these public and private universities is both regulated and monitored, according to the definition described in Decree M/27 of 1424 (2003 in the Gregorian calendar) and later updated by the Law of Universities rendered by Decree M/27 of 1442 (2020 in the Gregorian calendar) (Council of Universities' Affairs, 2020). The Decree considers a private university as "a corporate entity whose primary purpose is to provide an educational service above the secondary level without aiming to achieve material profit" (Ministry of Education, 2022). Furthermore, "The private university has the right to conduct its internal educational, financial, and administrative affairs that do not contradict the regulations, provisions and the scientific principles and norms" (Ministry of Education, 2022). In addition, private universities are described by the Decree as "self-financing, and their establishment and growth

depend on continuous internally-generated funds” (Ministry of Education, 2022), raised through their independent financial and administrative affairs, which is the main driver that enables innovation and competition with the public universities. In terms of the public universities, according to the Decree these are described as “a public, academic institution with a corporate personality that is financially and administratively independent. It contributes to implementing the state’s educational policy following the law’s provisions and does not aim for profit” (Ministry of Education, 2022). Therefore, while both the private and public universities have administrative and financial independence, private universities are provided an edge in managing their internal processes that facilitates the utilisation of marketing communications strategies to achieve their overall goals.

Considering the estimated KSA student enrolment of 2.1 million in 2022, both public and private universities are predicted to only offer capacity for 1.95 million students, resulting in a deficit of 150,000 places (Ernst & Young Global Ltd., 2021). To address such shortfalls in availability, the National Centre for Privatization was commissioned in 2016 to facilitate the privatisation of ten sectors in the KSA, one of which is education. The government body has focused on two principal targets in that field (i) reducing universities’ fiscal and operational dependence on public funding, and (ii) identifying opportunities to improve learning outcomes among students. This privatisation drive has been another reason for the stimulation of competitive practices between public and private universities in the KSA.

As described by Al-Thagafi et al. (2020), the KSA has employed different marketing channels such as email, search engine optimisation, events, press releases, online advertisements, direct mail, and social media to communicate with the target audiences. All of these channels and accounts are monitored by the Ministry of Higher Education to ensure that all universities are marketing their activities and services under the principles and regulations of the Ministry, in contrast to other cultures where private universities take the lead in brand marketing compared to public universities, who tend to resist changes to their core mission (Judson et al., 2008). Therefore, new insight could be identified from the marketing information displayed on the websites of the private and public universities in the KSA, which could reveal links to national culture’s influence on the IMC in the KSA. These cultural factors in the KSA could shine a light on how power and structure influence organisational activities, with

Pasmore et al. (2019) observing that strategic implementation may be affected by the organisational structure.

In terms of realms of a social and economic nature, power has been equated with control and influence (Merlo, 2011), and force (Hardy, 1996), together with authority, among myriad similar terms. Hence, Hardy (1996) asserts that power involves control's intensity in decision-making. All abstract levels must be considered when seeking a definition of power, in order to overcome any uncertainty regarding such definition. Despite the potential to neglect certain typical applications of the notion, it is necessary to derive a fit-for-purpose definition that is suitable to comprehend an organisation's control system. Power can be defined as the ability to realise change, to create a desired effect, or the force through which outcomes are effected (Hardy, 1996). However, such definitions involve limitations that decrease power's potential in the processes or the control of organisational decision-making. According to Hardy (1996), real power elements can be wielded by one or more senior executives, or a whole department that can impact on how decisions are made and steer the strategic/operational direction. Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) underscore the manner in which power is exercised, such as utilising resources to influence the decision-making processes, making sure that power can be utilised to control access to such processes, and using cultural assumptions to legitimise power. In this study's context, the legitimisation of power via culture could represent a suitable perspective from which to explore power distance's relevance in the KSA's national culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). Four dimensions of power are provided by Landells and Albrecht (2013), namely, connection, informational, personal and positional. In this study's context, where the primary focus is on the exploration of national culture, such power element traits are envisaged across the participants, which could be used to investigate the implementation strategies of IMC. In the following section national culture, organisational culture and IMC are introduced as fundamental components of this thesis.

1.2.3 National culture, organisational culture and IMC

1.2.3.1 National culture

Among the many theories on national culture, the Hofstede model is one of the most relevant that identifies country-specific traits in relation to the culture (Van Assche et al., 2021), which was developed based on four main dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and individualism versus collectivism. Among those dimensions, studies have characterised countries based on their respective scores, in which the KSA has been rated high in power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). The national culture where organisations reside can be regarded as vital when the values and norms of such organisations are favoured by the national culture. A strong national culture influences the population of a given organisation to perceive and implement actions that could improve service delivery and so forth. Organisations with strong cultures can involve members exhibiting active resistance to national culture when it does not favour the marketing strategy (Braunscheidel et al., 2010). The members are considered vital in terms of promoting the organisational values (Wilson, 2001), who may feel the need to examine the organisation's programmes if these are under political pressure (Landells and Albrecht, 2013), particularly in countries where the national culture outweighs other dimensions. Such employees could create barriers for the organisation. The attitude or behaviour of the employee may act as a barrier against the brand-aligned market orientation of the organisation. Market-oriented change is resisted when employees regard the demands or initiatives as unreasonable. While the development and implementation of marketing strategy involves separate activities, integration between the two must be taken into account by marketing managers, although such corporate communication has been highlighted as sensitive and complex, especially when the understanding of human resource management and organisational behaviour is limited (Wilson, 2001). Difficulties may also arise when the development and integration of the marketing strategy are regarded as two different processes (Cespedes and Piercy, 1996). Highly profitable organisations also tend to have highly efficient marketing strategies when the culture is receptive. The key point here is that while the managers in certain national cultures tend to have improved performance (Yarbrough et al., 2011), it is unclear why this is the case (Berthon et al., 2001). Therefore, exploring such potential success among private and public HEIs in

the Arab world could provide new insights into organisational culture and communications.

1.2.3.1.1 Emergence of organisational culture from national culture

The impact of both organisational culture and national culture has been widely reported in the literature in terms of shaping employee behaviour (Hofstede, 1984; Schneider et al., 2013; Owusu Ansah and Louw, 2019; Knein et al., 2020). Despite this established relationship of national and organisational culture, the extent to which organisational culture is shaped by national culture having also been explored and reported in the competition and cooperation domain (Knein et al., 2020), and HEIs also being captured within private and public organisations' brand and marketing in the UK and US (Foroudi et al., 2017), understanding the factors that contribute to the emergence of organisational culture within national culture could also help to better understand the relationship between the two cultures.

While a two-sided argument exists amongst scholars whereby national culture could lead to significant detrimental impacts on organisational culture (Zucker, 1977; Aguilera and Jackson, 2003; Nelson and Gopalan, 2003), and others consider that strong organisational culture could outweigh national culture (Barney, 1986; Gerhart, 2009), the two phenomena could still benefit from further research (Lee & Kramer, 2016). Since the two dimensions differ from one region or country to another (Rider et al., 2021), it is vital to consider how other dimensions of culture such as the high and low contexts shape organisational strategies.

In the light of the different dimension proposed by the work of Hall, this section considers the emergence of organisational culture by virtue of the national culture in which the organisation finds itself. One of the prominent differences among national cultures is the manner in which they communicate (Wurtz, 2005), with the communication style further influenced by a number of factors including relationships, structured social hierarchy and behavioural norms (Nishimura et al., 2008). These factors have also been linked to organisational culture (Lee & Kramer, 2016; Owusu Ansah and Louw, 2019; Knein et al., 2020). The emergence of IMC as a means of holistic communication adopted by organisations can be extended to such cultural communication patterns that could shape organisational strategies, particularly in marketing (Panigyrakis and Zarkada, 2014), and brand building (Eagle et al., 2007;

Kliatchko, 2008), among many other organisational strategies. In another scope, researchers such as Olson et al. (2005) have identified how the strategy of an organisation, which is affected by national culture (Oliver, 2016), tends to shape organisational structure. Again, within the concept of communication, research has characterised the majority of Middle Eastern and Asian cultures as high context (Nishimura et al., 2008), in which communication is often non-verbal and contributes significant communication strategies among staff at the senior and lower levels. This is comparatively different to the low-context communication that is often practised in the Western world such as the UK, US and Europe (Nishimura et al., 2008). Such national cultural characteristics will be discussed in section 2.5 in greater detail in relation to IMC and its relevance to shaping organisational strategies and structure.

1.2.3.2 Organisational culture

The definition of culture has been widely disputed as far back at its inception, both within the fields of anthropology and later sociology. Hence, organisational culture can be perceived and defined differently. Schein and Schein (2016, p.6) explain:

[T]he culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern or system of beliefs, values, and behavioural norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness.

Meanwhile, an earlier definition according to Berthon et al. (2001) perceives culture as “Conscious and unconscious patterns of assumptions, values, and beliefs shared by a collective”, which confirms elements of brands in marketing among HE functions, as per the commercial sector, and could explain how the cultural setting affects IMC implementation due to the specific context in the KSA; for example, the manner in which digital marketing restriction or Internet access in the Arab world (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007) could lead to different marketing communication approaches. It was found that the major issue involved poor understanding of the client’s concept of IMC, even among UK companies (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017), whereby the chemistry between two studied organisations required significant attention with factors such as adequate awareness of the departmental power necessary for implementation and a clear implementation pathway for IMC identified as key challenges (Mortimer and Laurie,

2017), including how practitioners adopt both explicit and implicit strategies for IMC implementation.

1.2.3.3 Integrated marketing communication

Although the customer perspective on IMC has been broadly researched (Valos et al., 2016; Bruhn and Schnebelen, 2017; Finne and Grönroos, 2017; Porcu et al., 2020), other study has considered marketing factors such as sales, and profit and market share to be higher upon IMC application among small, service-oriented and consumer-focused industries, particularly in the US. Besides the role of IMC in improving organisational performance, researchers have also identified the link between organisational culture and performance, organisational culture and IMC implementation among UK managers (Porcu et al., 2017), and culture and its impacts on information technology (IT) acceptance among societies in the US and the KSA (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007).

First, it is important to understand the definition and concept of IMC from different perspectives, as either “The stakeholder-centred interactive process of cross-functional planning and alignment of organisational, analytical and communication processes that allows for the possibility of continuous dialogue by conveying consistent and transparent messages via all media to foster long-term profitable relationships that create value” (Porcu et al., 2017), or as “the degree of coordination of marketing communication tools for a product or service” (Foroudi et al., 2017). Despite a collaborative organisational culture more positively impacting IMC compared to a controlling organisational culture (Porcu et al., 2020), there is a lack of a clear distinction in the literature regarding how organisational culture influences IMC in private and public institutions among certain regions such as the Middle East, where gender balance and media communications are often limited.

The concept of marketing was first articulated by Drucker (1954, cited in Webster, 2009), who observed that marketing is not a separate function but rather represents the entire business as perceived by the customer. Therefore, the concept of marketing represents a particular organisational culture and its values and beliefs, whereby customers are central to the business process (Moorman et al., 1993). Marketing researchers drew initial assistance from the behavioural sciences in the early 1950s to study ‘culture’ and understand consumer behaviour, while support was also sought

from the behavioural sciences to understand cultures and subcultures as segments of the market (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Moreover, efforts also involved studying culture as communication and conducting cross-cultural comparisons of international markets (Moorman et al., 1993).

The subsequent research on culture in marketing tended to focus on consumer behaviour. However, researchers started to acknowledge the significance of organisational culture in managing marketing operations. Weitz and Jap (1995) included the concept of organisational culture in developing their model of selling effectiveness. Parasuraman et al. (1988) observed that greater attention is paid to the culture of the organisation, with structural explanations for the effectiveness of management. Additionally, issues related to the implementation of the marketing strategy and developing the dimension of consumer orientation led to questions pertinent to the organisational culture (Bonoma, 1985; Ruekert and Walker, 1987; Webster, 1997). Hayes (1995) observed that the next phase in developing the field of strategic market planning should involve formally integrating issues related to organisational culture.

A widely recognised notion is that when the marketing strategy is properly executed, increased performance and productivity are generated. However, this may not always be the case. Although some researchers indicate a positive relationship between marketing and performance, others found that the relationship is only modest (Kotter and Heskett, 1992). Some researchers also point to a significant relationship between market-oriented culture and corporate performance. The culture of the organisation is the glue that bonds the management together and enhances their effectiveness (Han et al., 1998; Sin et al., 2002), with evidence establishing a link between externally focused organisational culture and decision-making (Berthon et al., 2001). A survey conducted by Sin et al. (2002) found that the marketing efficiency of the organisation was related to three elements of culture: proximity to customers, identifiable corporate values and market-oriented focus.

Having presented national culture, organisational culture and IMC, this chapter now turns to the problem statement and study purpose, as presented in section 1.3.

1.3 Problem statement and study purpose

National culture can influence laws and regulations (as seen in the KSA), which in turn can influence leadership (Schneider et al., 2013), organisational structure (Nelson and Gopalan, 2003; Strauß et al., 2021), and organisational practices (Barry, 2009). Thus, difference in the regulation of private and public universities in the KSA can shape different organisational culture within the same national culture. While this can represent a strategic area to explore in terms of the positive aspects of such influence, organisations continue to be affected by other factors, even among different locations due to globalisation (Liyanaarachchi, 2021). Among the myriad facets of organisations, marketing communications has been identified as a key strategy in supporting organisational growth (Eagle et al., 2007; Foroudi et al., 2017; Pavlidou and Efstathiades, 2021), especially in countries with high indices of national culture such as the KSA where relationships can influence marketing (Gronroos, 1990), and hence shape communication (Nishimura et al., 2008), which continues to make the case for further studies within the context of culture and marketing communications.

During the last decade, studies have been conducted to explore the influence of organisational culture on different aspects of marketing activities such as advertising, public relationships and the brand (Foroudi et al., 2017), with others conducted among educational organisations and specifically in HEIs through the development of instruments for IMC implementation (Porcu et al., 2017), and integrated marketing strategies employing intrinsic and extrinsic measures (Ots and Nyilasy, 2017). However, limited studies have reported how national and organisational culture could influence IMC strategies in the context of HEIs globally, and more specifically among Arab countries with their increasing number of private HEIs. A study by Eagle et al. (2007) highlighted that organisations tend to construct and deploy IMC for situation-specific strategies, which promote the use of flexible rather than rigid rules in IMC implementation. Furthermore, Kerr et al. (2008) explain the challenge that HEIs face whereby different departments should develop consistent communication messages throughout their campuses in order to reflect the institutional spirit, philosophy and mission. However, these communicational messages should not be generic, especially where national culture dominates with typically high-context culture, and the private sector seeks to adopt more market-driven strategies.

Although educational departments can integrate different channels to deliver specific communication messages, the major challenge is that different departments/units must engage collaboratively to assure that the institutional brand is protected. In the Arab region, Mathew and Soliman (2021) explored the relevance of digital marketing communications among a tourist organisation, which highlights the relevance of customer attitude and behaviour in achieving digital marketing communications. However, in HE, a paucity of research has been conducted on the culture of public and private universities in the KSA with respect to understanding how organisational culture influences IMC, and particularly given that the unique nature of Saudi national culture in terms of the power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007) could contribute new insight on IMC implementation in this setting, where the private sector is keen to change the norm through a market-based approach to organisational strategies. Therefore, this research can be considered as pioneering in seeking to provide insight on how organisational culture influences IMC in Saudi HEIs. The subsequent section presents the contributions of this study.

1.3.1 Research contributions

The following research contributions have been identified for this study, in relation to IMC implementation in the KSA's HE domain:

- Identifying similarities and differences among public and private HEIs in terms of the organisational strategies for implementing IMC.
- Exploring how market-driven private HEIs have utilised low-context culture in a high-context environment to achieve organisational growth.

1.4 Research question, aim and objectives

1.4.1 Research question

This study explores the following research question:

How do elements of national and organisational culture affect private and public institutions and influence the development and implementation of IMC strategies in the KSA's HEI context?

1.4.2 Research aim

This study aims to explore how national and organisational culture influence the development and implementation of IMC strategies in HEIs in the KSA.

1.4.3 Research objectives

In order to fulfil the research aim and respond to the research questions, the following objectives are established:

1. To critically and analytically review the literature on organisational culture and IMC strategies within the context of national culture.
2. To formulate a theoretical framework that interlinks the various models and elements from the literature with IMC strategies.
3. To critically review the developed framework based on the collected data, and to establish whether there are any incongruities between the espoused theory and theory in use for the KSA.
4. To build and evaluate a revised conceptual framework following an in-depth analysis of the fieldwork data from public and private HEIs in the KSA.

Section 1.5 now presents the rationale for this study in order to justify its relevance and importance.

1.5 Rationale for the study

The culture of an organisation has the potential to significantly influence the intended effect of even the most deliberated organisational strategies. It affects the organisational life in myriad ways such as the decisions that are made, who makes such decisions, the distribution of rewards, how people are promoted, the manner in which employees are treated, and how the organisation responds to its environment (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Some organisations are unaware of the diversities of the culture in which they operate, and thus fail to implement effective strategies accordingly so that the vested interests, long-standing attitudes, and ingrained organisational practices are not eroded when new strategy is decided by managers. While national culture has been found to influence organisational culture (Knein et al., 2020), organisational strategies tend to help manage the broader national culture in order to ensure the organisational performance (Lee and Kramer, 2016). Yarbrough

et al. (2011) observe that if the organisation fails to analyse its culture, this results in a lack of support for key individuals within the organisation. Furthermore, they argue that such a lack of commitment can negatively affect the process of implementation, as failure to support the strategy can impact the outcome of the tasks that need to be carried out.

One of the main elements of the implementation process is institutionalising the strategy (Olson et al., 2005) so that it can support the daily decisions being made by the management. In the same context, IMC strategies are gaining ground within the Middle East and Asia in general (Turner, 2017), and in academia specifically (Foroudi et al., 2017). The successful implementation of IMC strategies also depends on the organisational culture (Foroudi et al., 2017; Porcu et al., 2020), while study by McGuinness and Morgan (2005) identified the organisational capability for change as part of the organisational culture, representing a new construct in organisational change. The structure of the organisation has been linked to its organisational culture (Lee and Kramer, 2016), as well as the national culture (Owusu Ansah and Louw, 2019; Knein et al., 2020). Although IMC strategy is a well-investigated concept in terms of implementation with respect to other aspects of the organisation (Kliatchko, 2005; Eagle et al., 2007; Turner, 2017), there is a lack of agreement with respect to the various factors of national and organisational management, especially as organisations could either be high- or low-context cultures (Wurtz, 2005; Nishimura et al., 2008). Furthermore, research has continued to highlight the different scopes of organisational objectives among the public and private sectors (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Loeffler and Bovaird, 2019), and particularly in education (Judson et al., 2008), whereby different organisational characteristics lead to distinct growth strategies among which customer communication is considered to be key (Lohr et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a continued call for improved research to understand the scope of IMC within such institutions.

The ongoing need to explore communication strategies among the private sector appears to be driven by competitiveness to sustain the organisational mandate, particularly in the KSA (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Essa and Harvey, 2022), although public sector organisations deliver complex services such as education, healthcare, public transportation, waste management, water delivery, media, and public relations, with this complexity potentially being the reason behind the considerable differences

between the public and private sectors (Gil-Garcia et al., 2019). The smooth execution of these services requires extensive and complex planning, including consideration of the human resources and environmental conditions. Thus, in the marketing communications domain it has become significant to explore IMC implementation with respect to public and private organisations. Successful implementation of IMC strategy is shaped by the organisational culture (Porcu et al., 2017), and hence their interlinkages could provide a valuable perspective when explored alongside national culture due to its influence on the organisation culture (Schneider et al., 2013; Knein et al., 2020). With marketing representing one of the main elements in an organisation (Wilson, 2001), marketing communications and its strategy has become key to its success (Eagle et al., 2007; Podnar and Balmer, 2021). In recent decades, the marketing paradigm has grown, leading to shifts in the orientation of marketing that was initially focused on products, then shifted to the consumer dimension, and more recently to the human dimension (Porcu et al., 2017; Pavlidou and Efstathiades, 2021).

Besides the research conducted by Foroudi et al. (2017) among two UK universities, which confirmed the key constructs of brand identity including service attributes, brand elements, country of origin, and public relations having positive links to image, reputation and brand, there is a lack of studies that explore organisational culture's impact on the development and implementation of IMC in public and private universities among Arab countries, although one study considered IMC among multi-cultural sporting activities in the region (Turner, 2017). Therefore, the current study could lead to new insights in terms of understanding how national culture elements such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance could shape IMC in the KSA. Issues related to HE marketing communication have become more challenging due to various HE marketing issues such as determining who is the actual customer (e.g., the enterprise, the students or their families), the nature of the relevant stakeholders, marketisation, the degrees offered, the facilities provided by each campus, the location of every institution, and the methods of applying business-oriented practices (Foroudi et al., 2017; Al-Thagafi et al., 2020). Moreover, the HE domain is continuously experiencing change at various levels due to branding (Foroudi et al., 2017), the employability and facilities for international students in the local labour market (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020), intense global competition (Lowrie, 2007; Judson et al., 2008), and changes in funding regimes (Hernández and Pérez, 2003).

Researchers indicate that the public attitude towards an HEI depends on the perception of that institution, which is also based on the organisation's communication with stakeholders. This may also be referred to as the brand image in HE (Lowrie, 2007; Judson et al., 2008; Foroudi et al., 2017), since for a university to maintain its competitive position in the education market it has to maintain a certain brand image (Guilbault, 2016) that directly influences the intention of prospective students to enrol (Lim et al., 2020). Furthermore, the brand image influences the perceptions of the stakeholders regarding the university (Lazar et al., 2020), while it has been stated above that functional level decision-making is influenced by the organisational culture, and there is a difference between the organisational culture of public and private organisations, whereby the latter are more prone to innovation in their core mission (Foroudi et al., 2017). Therefore, despite national culture playing an important role in the KSA, there is limited research that explores organisational culture in order to enhance our basic understanding of standard versus customised international marketing strategies among the public and private universities. Based on the literature discussed above, although there are some useful assertions and directions regarding organisational culture and IMC, there is limited understanding with respect to the national and organisational culture of Saudi public and private universities in terms of exploring how organisational culture influences IMC. Therefore, the primary motivation for this study is to gain insights into how organisational culture influences IMC in Saudi HEIs. With the rationale for the study now established, section 1.6 asserts the significance of the research.

1.6 Significance of the research

Despite the growing international trend of utilising IMC as a tool to achieve organisational growth, cultural barriers (national and organisational) continue to affect such implementation, especially among Gulf nations. The KSA has the highest number of public and private universities in the Gulf region, and hence considering its unique national culture (power distance and uncertainty avoidance) would help to understand the relevance of such culture to IMC implementation and provide new insights into the relevance and nature of the similarities and differences among public and private universities in such a vital aspect of organisational communication. Consequently, this study intends to utilise cultural and IMC theories and frameworks to comprehend the

characteristics of national and organisational culture's impact on IMC in public and private HEIs in the KSA, thus contributing to knowledge on IMC and organisational culture theoretically and practically. The research framework derived from this study can provide guidance for the implementation of IMC in different public and private HEI contexts. Practically, the study will provide a new composite framework that constitutes both cultural and IMC theories in understanding the role of culture in IMC implementation among public and private institutions, and the characteristics of organisational strategic differences and commonalities among the KSA's HEIs. The following section presents the genesis of the study in terms of the key message for the reader and the insights realised.

1.7 Genesis of the study

Within the scope of every study, it is expected that besides the contribution to the key knowledge-gap filled within the research context, readers aim to identify new knowledge with relevance for their organisation, or research or personal learning point(s) to reflect upon. In this study, the key message for the reader is (i) in terms of understanding the interrelated connection between the KSA's national culture, which is perhaps unique and differentiates itself from other national cultures of the Western world such as the UK, US, Europe or Asia; and (ii) the KSA's uniqueness in terms of power distance and uncertainty avoidance (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007), and its connection to educational organisational culture in both public and private HEIs in the application of IMC strategy. This will provide new insights into the cultural differences in HEIs and the applications of IMC in private and public universities. Such insights will guide researchers and organisations in understanding how communication strategies are addressed and actioned among public and private institutions in the KSA. Next, section 1.8 summarises the research methodology applied in this study.

1.8 Methodology of the research

Determining the research methodology is a fundamental step in order to define the sequence of pathways and assumptions to be adopted for the study. While research can adopt different methodological designs, such as quantitative, qualitative, or mixed method, each has its own benefits and limitations, as detailed in Chapter 6. This study applies a qualitative methodology based on its ontological stance and the scope, which

intends to explore the concept of IMC implementation in relation to the national and organisational culture of public and private universities in the KSA. Having considered its relativist position, the study aims to gather qualitative data through semi-structured interviews to explore the relative differences and similarities among public and private Saudi HEIs. Furthermore, the study adopts an inductive approach as a means of responding to the research aim, objectives and question based on the interview responses.

This study adopts a relativist stance for the ontological position, which will explore the concept of national culture in the KSA as it impacts organisational culture among private and public universities implementing IMC practices. In the final section of this chapter, the thesis structure is presented in order to clarify for the reader how the thesis is organised.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters, which are summarised as follows:

Chapter 1 provided the context of the research; the problem statement; the research aim, objectives, and question; the significance of the study, the research methodology and the structure of the thesis.

Chapter 2 conducts a literature review of national culture and its relevance within research and practice across the globe. The lens of the review then focuses more closely on the KSA's national culture and its dimensions, presenting the fundamental theories that determine the national culture, the Hofstede model and the work of Hall, and facilitate in the development of the theoretical framework in Chapter 5.

Chapter 3 carries out a literature review of organisational culture, which explores its definition, theories, and typologies, covering the cultural web model, competing values framework and other relevant models. The chapter further highlights the critical concept of organisational culture and its impact on organisational performance, and again contributes to the development of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 4 provides a definition, context and the theories of IMC, and its relevance within organisational settings, with the 4-stage model selected to contribute towards the development of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 develops the theoretical framework for the study in order to facilitate the exploration of the research aim via the five selected models and frameworks.

Chapter 6 presents the methodological approach of the research in terms of the fundamental assumptions and specific approach adopted to conduct a qualitative research design as it applies to this thesis.

Chapter 7 conducts the data analysis and presents the major thematic findings, as well as the relevant linkages with the related theories that underpin the study objectives.

Chapter 8 presents a detailed discussion of the research findings in conjunction with the literature reviewed in chapters 2–4, supported by relevant theories, implications, and applications of the findings.

Chapter 9 draws the thesis to a close by providing a summative conclusion for the study, the implications for theory and practice, the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and a personal reflection from the researcher.

Chapter 2

National Culture

2.1 Introduction

This chapter forms an integral part of this study as it relates to national culture, which is the fundamental basis upon which the study explores organisational culture and IMC. The chapter provides the definition, concepts and theories surrounding national culture, as well as its impact on other aspects of organisations. The chapter addresses two fundamental theories—the Hofstede model and the work of Hall—that this study considers essential to investigate the research aim. The elements of each theory are considered in the context of this study, including power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and uncertainty avoidance for the Hofstede model; and high context and low context from the work of Hall. First, national culture is introduced.

2.2 Introduction to national culture

National culture has been a focus of interest in the literature for a considerable period of time, with its essence in research and practice having been widely reported (Doney et al., 1998; Lok and Crawford, 2004; Owusu Ansah and Louw, 2019; Strauß et al., 2021). Among many theories, in 1994 and 2011 Hofstede adopted Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) concept, which claims that cultural differences arise from the differences in what people consider to be of value to them, and which differs from Schwartz's (1994) perception of the universality of human values that are hence applicable to each society. This study next considers the Hofstede model, perceiving its elements as being highly relevant to the context of the study setting.

2.3 The Hofstede model

This section aims to provide a background of the Hofstede model and its relevance to understanding the KSA's national culture for IMC development and implementation.

The Hofstede model is considered a relevant model in this study due to its relevance in the KSA's national culture, and its subsequent influence on the organisational

culture of institutions located in the KSA. The model provides five major factors that impact on the culture of an organisation and are discussed below in sections 2.3.1–2.3.5 below: power distance, masculinity versus femininity, individualism versus collectivism, the uncertainty avoidance index, and long-term orientation.

2.3.1 Power distance

Power distance suggests the distribution of power and authority in different cultures. While some cultures believe in equality and provide equal rights and benefits for all, others are inspired by the notion that seniors and leaders are more deserving of special treatment and extra incentives due to their increased duties and responsibilities, although this could influence or delay organisational growth (Wurtz, 2005). This study intends to understand the various organisational characteristics impacted by power distance in the KSA's HEIs.

2.3.2 Masculinity versus femininity

Culture is also dominated based on the gender of employees. If an organisation hires only males, one could easily observe noise or even profanity in the workplace, even if the policies directly forbid this. On the other hand, female-dominated areas may show a trend of collective meals or in-house meetings, while policies might differ according to the gender (Van Assche et al., 2021). For instance, for female employees, the policies might suggest tasks and duties that will not frequently involve late nights or long-distance travel.

2.3.3 Individualism versus collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism refers to the organisational approaches that focus on aligning tasks to people on an individual or team basis, respectively. Organisations under the individualism cultural dimension assign separate tasks to each employee, and require them to work alone, without receiving help, guidance, or support from others. Therefore, how the public and private sectors in the KSA view this concept could benefit the current study. While collectivism has been promoted for team efficiency (Nishimura et al., 2008), this can be viewed through the context of bonds and relationships, as proposed by the work of Hall (Wurtz, 2005; Bernstein et al., 2016). On the contrary, organisations under the collectivism cultural dimension focus

on designing a team where every employee performs their assigned task individually, but has to work in the team and can acquire guidance from other team members, as well as their managers.

2.3.4 Uncertainty avoidance index

The uncertainty avoidance index belongs to a culture where the employees are better prepared to respond to uncertain and unanticipated situations. Countries with a high uncertainty avoidance index could be categorised by a lack of group work (Owusu Ansah and Louw, 2019). In such a culture, employees are equipped with a tolerance sufficient to withstand uncomfortable and unfavourable occurrences. Organisations adopting this approach invest heavily in training employees and providing them with exposure to challenging tasks, which ultimately enhances their growth. Within the context of the KSA this dimension has led to dual outcomes, with certain employers in the public sector viewing this as beneficial in terms of permanent contracts, while in the private sector driven by market forces this dimension could pose a risk to organisational growth in IT-related areas (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007), and thus exploring the uncertainty avoidance index's impact on HE could provide new insight into its effect on marketing communications.

2.3.5 Long-term orientation

The majority of organisations focus on incorporating a culture whereby the employees are hired on a long-term basis and do not seek to leave, which is particularly typical of the public sector where national culture scores highly, although studies have shown a lack of staff innovation under such orientation (Issa et al., 2021; Vitolla et al., 2021). In such organisations with a long-term orientation, the employees' commitment levels are higher, and they remain loyal. Whereas in those organisations where the culture does not promote a long-term relationship, the turnover rate is higher as employees frequently switch organisations when they are offered an improved opportunity. Within the context of the KSA this can be explored between public and private HEIs, whereby the former are more aligned to long-term orientation due to their non-profit nature (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Al-Thagafi et al., 2020), while the private sector adopts contractual schemes for staff that are renewable based on performance, and driven by the market and for-profit nature of such institutions. Therefore, this study could

provide new insight into the relevance of long-term orientation within the marketing communications context.

With the five dimensions of the Hofstede model now established, the following section provides a justification for the applicability of the model in this study.

2.3.6 Justification for using the Hofstede model

The Hofstede model comprises five dimensions. Cultural dimensions reflect independent preferences and differentiate the state of affairs amongst countries rather than individuals. Therefore, Hofstede's cultural model is utilised in this study to comprehend the local Saudi culture because through Hofstede, there are relative dimensions of a country whereby the human group is identified as unique. Nevertheless, cultures are only meaningful if they are compared (Bates et al., 1995). This is the main reason for incorporating the Hofstede model in this study as it allows the author to understand the local culture that will facilitate in exploring the organisational culture of private and public universities. In addition, and as stated above, the national culture will have an effect on IMC strategies which, via the Hofstede model, the author can determine to comprehend the organisational culture and its effect on the IMC strategies in the KSA.

The providence of culture provides guidance or directions with which we think and behave. The values of culture influencing business are explained in Hofstede's work, with five dimensions relevant to the KSA generally that impact on the business environment: power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and individualism/collectivism. Culture decides how things are achieved in an environment (Porcu et al., 2020), and may be related to a country (national culture), an organisation (corporate culture), or a distinct part of a community (sub-culture). Nobody is born with a culture, but rather it is what an individual learns from rituals, religion and artefacts. National culture is rapidly becoming an essential component in the development and implementation of marketing communications strategies internationally. Regarding the influence of culture on strategy, Kuang-Jung et al. (2015) argue that organisations are subjected to the influences of national culture, and therefore there is a need to re-shape marketing strategies accordingly. However, some organisations remain interested in plagiarising strategies from other countries (Vieira-dos Santos and

Gonçalves, 2018), which leads to dramatic consequences in terms of the organisational performance. In the modern era, international business has adopted a new dimension in terms of national culture and its impact. Moreover, Lichy and Merle (2020) believe that due to globalisation, marketing managers are forced to change the manner in which business is conducted overseas. Nowadays, it is claimed that an organisation with the capability to reshape its marketing strategy in order to satisfy the needs and requirements of its consumers has the optimum competitive edge (Deshpandé et al., 1993; Racat et al., 2021). Therefore, national culture is represented as a fundamental domain of interest in the marketing field. Moreover, Porcu et al. (2020) recommend that the success of an organisation in foreign markets is closely associated with its ability to handle culture.

It is claimed that national culture and its effect on marketing strategies can be extended to the interdisciplinary fields of marketing such as tourism marketing, online marketing, and consumer behaviour analytics (Liyanarachchi, 2021). Similarly, national culture has direct implications for the organisational culture, with organisations attempting to align their culture to that of the nation. It has been claimed that culture is a fundamental resource maintained by organisations, with many studies relating the influence of organisational culture over organisational performance (Berthon et al., 2001; Porcu et al., 2020). Therefore, culture's impact on employee behaviour is noticeable. Moreover, Foroudi et al. (2017) illustrate that national culture significantly impacts the culture of an industry and managerial behaviour, which leads to an even greater impact on local organisational culture development. Organisational culture is also represented as a bridge between culture and IMC strategies, since these are based on the local national culture. Furthermore, the internal culture of an organisation and its national culture have an impact on the IMC strategies of an organisation. Therefore, section 2.4 now considers the national culture of Saudi Arabia based on the Hofstede model.

2.4 Saudi national culture based on the Hofstede model

Focusing of the important concepts pertaining to the organisational culture involves identifying the associated value levels, as values offer a significant contribution to culture at an invisible level (Porcu et al., 2020; Rider et al., 2021). Based on this, the current study takes into account local culture in the KSA with the application of Hofstede's culture dimensions theory to explore the widespread local culture in the

KSA, and its linkage with organisational culture in the KSA, as discussed in sections 2.4.1–2.4.5 below.

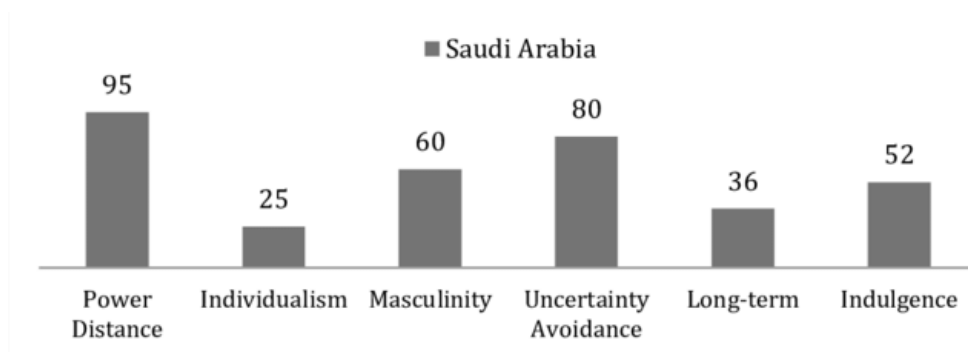


Figure 2-1: Hofstede's culture dimensions of the KSA (Hofstede Insights, 2020)

2.4.1 Power distance

Power distance highlights the reality that members of the same society do not enjoy equality, due to the cultural differences and corresponding behaviour of the stakeholders present in the society. Power distance refers to the realisation of less influential members of an organisation in terms of acceptance and expectations regarding the uneven power distribution. From this perspective, the KSA scores the highest with a mean score of 95 (see Figure 2-1), since the public recognise the hierarchical order, and the existence of distance thus requires no further clarification (Hofstede Insights, 2020). Centralisation and hierarchy are popular terms reflecting the intrinsic inequality, with junior members informed about the significance of order where the ideal leader is a powerful authoritarian (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). In the same pattern, the HE sector in the KSA has a fully centralised power structure.

The KSA is recognised globally as having high power distance, occupying the 80th position in this respect (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Issa et al., 2021). A number of reasons are behind this distance, with the primary one being religion. The KSA is an absolute monarchy (Podnar and Balmer, 2021), with the power distance legitimised by the Saudi society based on religion. The system encourages the elites to maintain their superior position despite potentially lacking in merit. It is widely believed that since religion provides the power distance based on this phenomenon, it is considered legitimate. Religion does not promote the power distance but finds support through sociological as well as psychological grounds. Under the aegis of culture, as well as

the norms that prevail in the society, Saudi children have been gripped by a mindset whereby it is a widely held belief that obeying superiors as well as the government is imperative. Through this, power distance has become an integral cultural dimension of the KSA.

2.4.2 Individualism

The peculiarity of the term 'individualism' reflects the degree of interdependence that a society carries between its individuals. Individualism is evaluated based on the perceptions around self-image and using the first-person pronouns 'we' or 'I'. A collectivist (we) society is where groups are formed by people who undergo an exchange of loyalty (Issa et al., 2021). While an individualist (I) society features an environment of selfish individual focus (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Baranik et al., 2021). With a score of 25 (see Figure 2-1), the KSA is considered a collectivist society based on the commitment among group members, as in the case of family and inter-relationships. The surmounting factor that emerges from collectivist culture is loyalty, which is inclined towards other prevalent laws as well as policies (Hofstede Insights, 2020). The society develops on the basis of ongoing relationships, where people are willing to take responsibility for their fellow colleagues. In such societies, sharing occurs in the pattern of a family, with decisions adopted on a group basis, and rights raised in group formation, while employees exist in management and groups.

2.4.3 Masculinity

The KSA is deemed a masculine society with a score of 60 on this dimension (see Figure 2-1). Along with the business hierarchy, gender hierarchy exists across the KSA, whereby male dominance prevails throughout business. Women have to comply with men in most circumstances. The majority of the managers are therefore men, with Saudi society primarily dominated by the male gender (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016).

2.4.4 Uncertainty avoidance

With regard to uncertainty avoidance, the KSA has a score of 80, reflecting its strong focus on regulating uncertainty (see Figure 2-1). Those countries able to maintain uncertainty avoidance at a high level are found to be inflexible in following traditional

principles and attitudes, while acquiring rigid codes of faith along with attitude (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016). Such cultures carry an emotional necessity of principles. Individuals are keen to be involved and hardworking since 'time is money', observing punctuality as well as accuracy norms. Security presents as an overriding factor, while innovation is seen as opposition (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007).

2.4.5 Long-term orientation

The KSA's society reflects normative nature being low with a score of 36 (see Figure 2-1). Individuals belonging to such communities show high commitment to building unlimited truths, as well as carrying out normative suggestions. Normative thinking has a high capacity to absorb traditional customs, as well as norms, which is considered better than a quick reply in a cultural sense. Saudis convey great respect to their tradition, along with the norms, and develop perceptions in the light of their cultural traditions and norms; for example, gender difference-based communication is the hallmark of Saudi culture, as well as its norm (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016).

Having discussed the Hofstede model dimensions in the context of Saudi national culture, another important theory that highlights cultural communications among high- and low-context societies is the work of Hall, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5 The work of Hall

The concept of cross-cultural communication was developed by Hall in 1976, which characterises cultures based on a high- and low-context framework. The concept of Hall's work has provided context in which a communication style can vary according to culture. Two major contexts were developed: (i) high-context communication, which is characterised by implied contextual elements, at times including situational, para-verbal and non-verbal cues; and (ii) low-context communication, which is rarely relied upon in implied contexts, and hence requires explicit written or verbal clarity. The dimension of culture in high and low contexts as proposed by Hall's framework has been found to be useful in understanding cross-cultural communication (Hakim, 1989).

Among the many concepts derived from the work of Hall, certain elements are described within the context of this study, namely social orientation, commitment, responsibility, communications and confrontation, as presented in sections 2.5.1–2.5.5 below.

2.5.1 Social orientation

The concept of bonds between parties in communication has been considered differently by the two dimensions of culture according to Hall's framework. In the high context, the parties tend to be deeply involved, which initially recognises family members as the closest, then extending to friends, colleagues and the wider community. Such bonds tend to imply expectation, commitment and mutual goodwill (Wurtz, 2005). This leads to a clear distinction between people within and outside the family (Han et al., 1998). The context of high context further identifies relationships in business. On the other hand, low context defines bonds that are often fragile, such as people who tend to depart in challenging circumstances. The high-context and low-context orientation have been classified according to regions or languages, as seen in Figure 2-2.

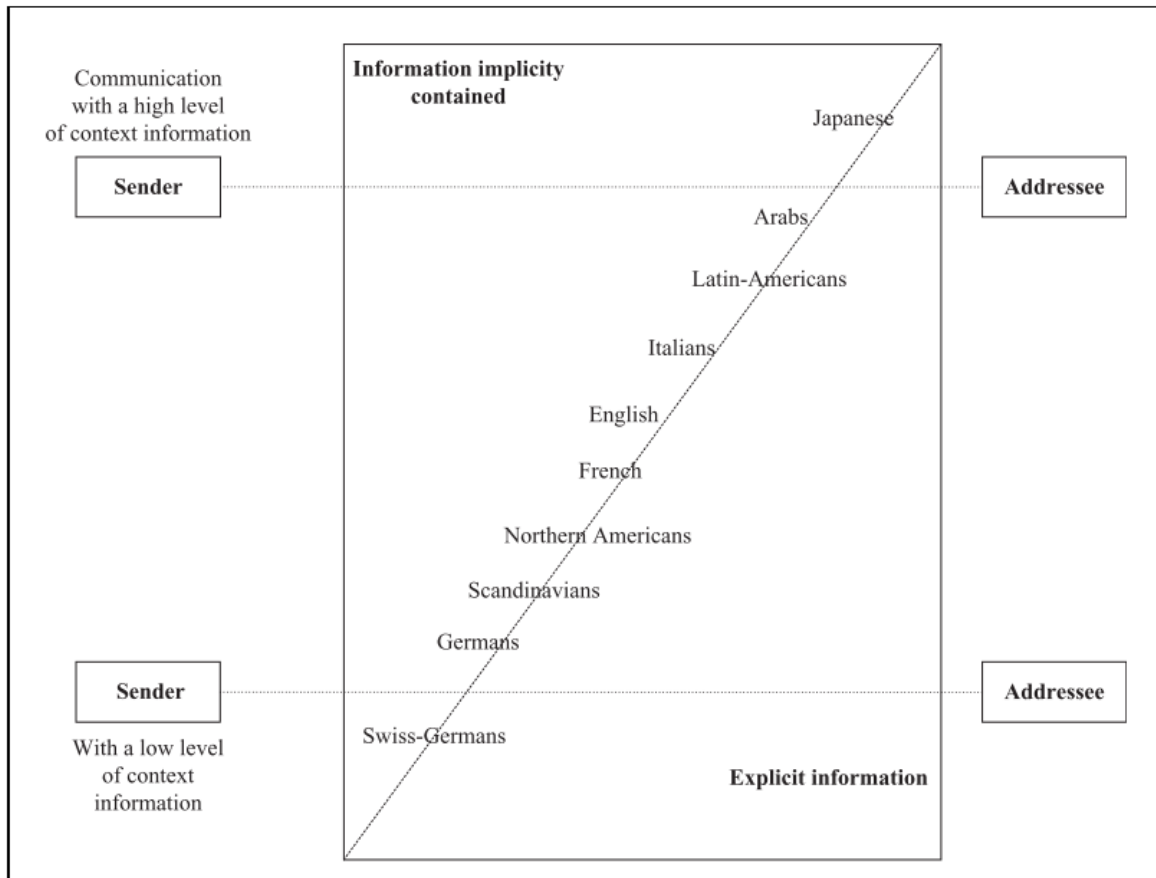


Figure 2-2: The cultural dimensions in Hall's framework (Kittler et al., 2011)

2.5.2 Commitment

Commitment is another important element that differentiates high-context and low-context cultural communication, with high-context cultures experiencing high levels of cohesiveness, leading to commitment to complete the task at hand. In this context of communication, sincerity is regarded as a key factor of commitment. High-context cultural communication tends to span lifelong relationships, which leads to caution in engaging in any form of commitment such as relationships. In a low-context culture, sincerity tends to be ignored and individuals are not typically bound to complete certain actions, despite changes in circumstances.

2.5.3 Responsibility

The alignment of commitment and social orientation bring about the issue of responsibility in high contexts, rendering those in authority responsible for the efforts of their subordinates (Fakkar et al., 2010). Meanwhile, low-context culture tends to

allow subordinates to be subjected to scrutiny in the case of errors. This is an integral aspect that could be utilised to define the limits of power and how it can be used, particularly where national culture provides appropriate limitations to organisational hierarchy and support for lower levels such as in the KSA.

2.5.4 Communications

Communications, representing an integral facet of this study, are another element that Hall's framework has processed with high context aligned to the intimate nature of human communication, which arises through structured hierarchy and norms. Communication in the KSA, a high-context culture (Salleh, 2005), can be seen to differ among individuals, either due to family ties or workplace communications, which this study intends to explore within HE. Furthermore, physical context plays a significant role in the communication, and the internalisation of the message. Meanwhile, low context relies on high codes of communication guided by the legal meanings of the terms employed, rather than the message alone, as per the high context.

2.5.5 Confrontation

Hall's dimensions of culture characterise how people react in the event of confrontation, with high context utilising its social cohesiveness and bonds to absorb conflict over long periods without confrontation arising (Fakkar et al., 2010; Kittler et al., 2011). Where necessary, non-confrontational means are utilised to resolve conflict and avoid destroying the bonds developed over time. In contrast, in low contexts confrontation can ignite at almost any time without notice, which may trigger official processes to resolve the issues that arise.

Within Hall's framework, the KSA and other Arab nations are considered high-context cultures, characterised by the bonds at all levels from the family to the workplace (Salleh, 2005), although the presence of private HEIs in the KSA could provide a different dimension due to the alignment of Western cultures of communication and policies (Bernstein et al., 2016).

Having presented the key elements of the work of Hall, the following section explores the role of 'wasta' within the KSA context.

2.6 The role of wasta

In spite of the continued cultural integration of Arab nations with the Western world as a component of globalisation to reduce cultural barriers, one common aspect that tends to affect workplace activities and decisions is the social relationships among staff, as well as the presence of intermediaries in decision-making, which has been referred to as 'wasta' (Mann, 2014). This study considers the work of Hall in understanding the impact of ties and relationships in shaping marketing communication, and thus the role of wasta is discussed here solely for literature purposes. There has been growing interest in understanding the relevance of wasta in career development among Arab countries (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011), and its interconnectedness with mentoring or networking (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Mann, 2014; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). With this study intending to explore IMC and its links to culture, by extension wasta has also been associated with the KSA's national culture (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). Nevertheless, other theories such as the work of Hall would appear to be more suitable, which is partly the focus of this study, although in HE teams directly dealing with IMC implementation.

Within project implementation in any organisation, teams are constituted and assigned either temporary or permanent contracts to work as a global practice, which are often determined based on the skills and qualifications of employees, and affected by intermediary or social contacts in the KSA (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). While this has been linked to national culture, not only in the KSA but also across other neighbouring Arab states including Sudan (Mann, 2014), among others (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Abalkhail and Allan, 2016), one key construct is that the private sector continues to deviate from such an approach compared to public institutions (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016), who are more likely to be influenced by the national culture even in Arab settings (Baranik et al., 2021). This represents a major distinction between the market economies of the West, where relationships do not form a significant role in organisational decisions (Baranik et al., 2021).

Within the context of this study, it is expected that private universities are less likely to present a similar extent of wasta compared to public universities, due to the strong attachment of the public sector to national culture (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). Furthermore, although differences could still exist among

private–private or public–public institutions, such nuances can be explored using the work of Hall, where relationships and ties could play a role in IMC implementation as a component of this study. The subsequent section draws this chapter to a close with a summary of this review of national culture.

2.7 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the two main theories in relation to national culture and the organisational culture of communications, namely, the Hofstede model and the work of Hall. The elements, characteristics and relevance to communication in the KSA were considered, which could form an essential component of this study's framework, as the major thrust of this research is exploring how organisational culture, being diluted by national culture, impacts the development and implementation of IMC in the public and private universities of the KSA.

Considering the relevance of Hofstede's culture model dimensions when applied to Saudi institutions, a high power distance score (95) was found, which implies a more hierarchical structural order, greater centralisation and the increased likelihood of inequalities. The second dimension of uncertainty avoidance also received a high score (80) for Saudi institutions, suggesting that those engaged in KSA organisations tend to ignore creative and innovative opportunities, with a preference for adhering to rigid behaviours and beliefs. The work of Hall was also discussed to explore high and low cultural contexts within the KSA's HEIs, which could provide new insight into how national culture shapes public and private HEIs within the country. The aspects of national culture such as central authority, compliance, uncertainty avoidance, lack of institutional autonomy and low focus on self-governance render the Saudi HEI culture unique, and distinct from the HEIs of Western nations. Furthermore, the concept of high- and low-context culture proposed by the work of Hall identifies the KSA as a high-context culture. Therefore, this context requires exploration with respect to organisational culture and IMC in the HEIs of the KSA, as carried out in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Organisational Culture

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study aims to understand how national and organisational culture influence the development and implementation of IMC strategies in HEIs in the KSA.

This chapter thus explores the concept of organisational culture using a typology theory, the cultural web model and the competing values framework. The overall discussion is divided into different sections, which include the origins and definition of organisational culture, the development of organisational culture and the role of organisational culture in strategic decision-making. Since the major focus of this research is HE, the organisational culture in HEIs is also considered, leading to a discussion on the organisational culture models pertinent to gaining a theoretical understanding of the research topic, as described above. This chapter concludes with the selection and justification of the most appropriate organisational cultural models drawn from the incorporated IMC strategies' perspectives. First, the origins and definitions of organisational culture are established in section 3.2.

3.2 Origins and definitions of organisational culture

3.2.1 Origins of organisational culture

When the term 'culture' was first introduced in the Oxford English Dictionary in 1430, it was defined as the cultivation and tending of soil, based on the Latin *culture*. By the 19th century, the term was defined as 'high culture', meaning refinement of mind, manners or taste. By the 20th century, its meaning had broadened, and in terms of the organisation, "OC [organisational culture] consists of shared beliefs and values established by leaders and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, ultimately shaping employee perceptions, behaviours and understanding" (Hofstede, 2001, p.15). As early as 1930, the term 'organisational culture' had begun to appear. The first systematic attempt at employing organisational culture appeared

in the final phase of the Hawthorne studies at the Western Electric Company, with the findings revealing a basic understanding of the concept. Most scholars who attempted early explorations of organisational culture approached it from a quantitative perspective. However, by the mid-20th century, scholars had begun to approach the term from the qualitative viewpoint, including the anthropological perspective, leading them to consider organisational culture as “internal coherence” (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961, p.35) or a “consistent pattern of thought and action” (Benedict, 1934, p.42). Moreover, culture has been defined as a “collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 1984, p.13). According to Berthon et al. (2001), culture is seen as “conscious and unconscious patterns of assumptions, values, and beliefs shared by a collective”. In the latter half of the 20th century, interest in organisational culture was primarily focused on the economic developments taking place in the 1970s, with sustainability in economic performance being particularly relevant to the definition of organisational culture. Having described the origins of organisational culture, the next section explores the various definitions that can be found in the literature.

3.2.2 Definitions of organisational culture

Before discussing the definitions of organisational culture in detail, it is important to differentiate between ‘organisational climate’ and ‘organisational culture’. Schneider et al. (2013) state that organisational climate involves the meanings attached to people's experiences in the workplace, while organisational culture relates to the values that moderate life in the organisation. A range of definitions have been considered for the term ‘culture’, such as being “in some sense a magic word positive in connotations but hard to pinpoint in any science that attempts to use it as its core term” (Valsiner, 2009, p.10). Moreover, organisational culture can be considered as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another” (Hofstede, 2001, p.5). Organisational culture may also be explained as comprising the assumptions, beliefs, norms, values, symbols, artefacts, language, actions and patterns understood and shared by the organisational members (Schein, 2018). When this view is considered, it highlights culture as a body of knowledge whose understanding, and interpretation, provide the organisation with a distinct identity (Marceau, 2011). This approach depicts the consensus across the organisation among the members. A different perspective is related to the connection

between different sub-cultures of the organisation, which can also conflict with one another (Hassard and Holliday, 1998; McAuley et al., 2007). Exterior to this subculture, inconsistency and ambiguity can also exist; for example, where members' words differ from their actions (Marceau, 2011). Here, disagreement and agreement are constantly changing, and no stable sub-culture or organisation-wide consensus exists (Schein and Schein, 2018).

Schein (2018) defines culture as a pattern comprising shared assumptions learnt by the group as it solves issues related to integration and adaptability, as shown in Figure 3-1. Such assumptions work so effectively that the group regards these as valid, and starts conveying them to the upcoming members, so that they also think and act in line with such assumptions.

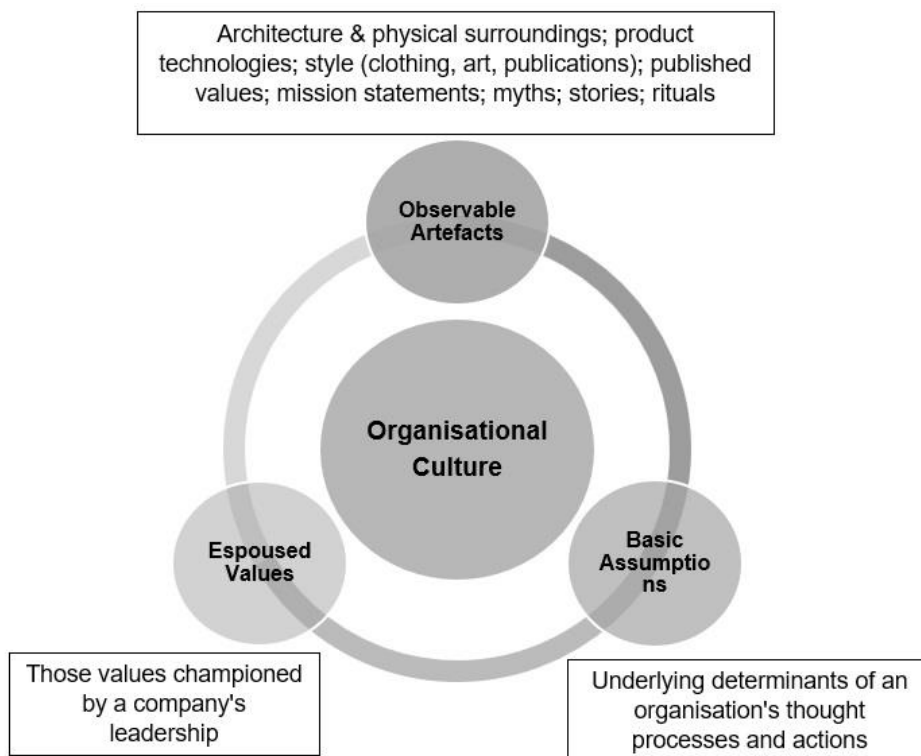


Figure 3-1: Major components of organisational culture (adapted from Schein, 2006)

Three elements are of prime importance when definitions of culture from different disciplines (i.e., psychology, sociology, management science and anthropology) are considered: (i) the element of shared meaning is of crucial significance, (ii) culture is constructed socially, and (iii) culture has cognitive and symbolic layers. In order to comprehend these three elements or layers, Schein (2018) highlights three categories

that provide compartments for the elements underpinning culture: observable artefacts, espoused values and basic assumptions. Observable artefacts represent the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of the organisation, how things are perceived and what is meaningful and important for the organisation (Fullan, 2007). This involves its physical and architectural surroundings, technologies, products and style, as well as the mission statement, publications, jargon and language. Rituals, practices and ceremonies are also a part of observable artefacts (Schein, 2018). Functional level strategy typically involves changing the perceptions and shared values of organisational members through hierarchical structure, mission, social interaction and communication, with the corporate culture defined as a set of values and beliefs in which the consumer is central to the company's business practices and strategies (Schneider et al., 2016). Artefacts consisting of symbols and signs are used to show organisational values, including the physical setting of the organisation (Schneider et al., 2016).

The culture of the organisation highlights the manner in which groups and people interact with one another, and with stakeholders and clients (Annosi et al., 2020), and influences the manner in which employees identify themselves with the organisation (Schrodt, 2002). Other phrases are also employed in the business management literature, such as 'workplace culture', 'corporate culture' and 'business culture' (Johnson and Scholes, 1999; Mullins and McLean, 2019). Organisational culture is generally perceived to be the beliefs of the company, its attitudes and values, and how they influence employee behaviour (Annosi et al., 2020). The culture of the organisation not only underpins the domain of low-level worker hierarchies, but also the executives of the organisation (Kuada and Sørensen, 2010). While there are implicit elements of organisational culture, Fullan (2007) and Marceau (2011) argue that understanding the explicit elements of organisational culture would enable the organisation to more effectively achieve its goals (Schein, 2018). However, in areas of the social sciences where different human influences exist, there are causal links that cannot be easily interpreted (Fullan, 2007). The organisation's culture is influential throughout the various activities of, and the life within the organisation (Hassard and Holliday, 1998).

Organisational culture comprises the assumptions, beliefs, manner of interaction and values of the organisation, as well as their contribution to its unique psychological and

social environment (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The culture of the organisation involves the expectations, philosophy, and member guidelines (Annosi et al., 2020). Further, the self-image, interaction with the outer world and future expectations are also included. Culture also comprises the beliefs, shared attitudes, written and unwritten rules, and customs that develop over the course of time. Culture also involves the vision of the organisation, its systems, norms, language, symbols, beliefs and assumptions, as well as habits (Needle and Burns, 2010). Simply put, the culture of the organisation represents the manner in which things are done in and by the organisation (Deal and Kennedy, 2008). While the mentioned definitions express the role culture plays in the organisation, there are also definitions that take into account behavioural elements and how employee behaviour influences the organisation. Organisational culture represents shared assumptions that underpin the activities taking place in the organisation (De Mooij and Hofstede, 2010). There is universal agreement that not only does organisational culture exist, but that it plays a prominent role in the behavioural development of the organisation (Buble, 2012; Mair et al., 2012; Grant and Grant, 2016). However, what the term actually means is interpreted differently depending on the researcher, such as sustained economic performance (Barney, 2001). Further, there has been much debate on whether the leadership of the organisation can influence the culture (Bhaduri, 2019). However, a clear definition is necessary in order to argue whether a factor such as organisational culture can or cannot be changed (Mair et al., 2012).

The definition is also important to understand the connection with other organisational elements (McInnes, 2012). Organisational culture is also expressed as the inner workings, self-image, interaction with the external world and future expectations (Watson, 2017). It embodies the beliefs, shared behaviour, customs and implied rules that employees have developed over time in their communications and operations in the organisation (Schein, 2018). Schneider et al. (2013) argue that the culture of the organisation is neither defined nor developed explicitly. It emerges from the beliefs of those working within the organisation. The culture of the organisation shapes what is acceptable in the organisation (Ciampa and Dotlich, 2015). Culture can also be helpful in defining the values of the organisation and its core principles (Tietze et al., 2003).

From the above discussion, it is clear that there are a wide variety of perspectives in terms of the definition and relevance of organisational culture, which are all relevant

to this study, although the general agreement established in this section highlights both the economic and sustainable growth of organisations as the key rationale behind a focus on this culture. With the definitions of organisational culture now established, the following section consider how such culture develops.

3.3 Development of organisation culture

According to Annosi et al. (2020), the culture of an organisation contains shared meanings, beliefs, values and acceptable behaviour. The leaders in an organisation tend to utilise shared meaning, rituals, stories, images and jargon in managing meanings and communications for internal employee communication, and external marketing communication. The culture of an organisation influences the interactions between leadership and the workforce (Zerjav et al., 2018). The existence and usage of shared symbols enables both parties to comprehend each other without negotiating the meaning of the conversation. Therefore, culture not only influences the social interaction, but also its results (Prutina, 2015). Over the course of time, the culture of the organisation is preserved with new rewards, recruitment, penalties and so forth (Bass and Avolio, 1994).

There are several mediums through which culture manifests itself (Mair et al., 2012). Behavioural factors represent one of the elements of organisational culture (Haslam, 2004). The example in this regard includes the language employed, traditions practised, customs observed and rituals followed in different situations (Boonstra, 2012). Next are the principles that are publicly announced, as well as the policies of the organisation. Together, these can constitute the organisational philosophy that is followed and presented to the stakeholders and employees (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011). This also includes the rules followed by the employees in terms of interactions with one another (Alvesson, 2012). Further, culture involves how activities are carried out in the organisation, and how external stakeholders interact (Pompper, 2014). Less visible elements include shared mental models, thinking patterns, habits, perceptions, language, ideas and shared meanings, as well as the symbols, images and signs employed by the members of the organisation (Schein, 2018).

Rainey (2009) argues that the culture of the organisation represents its values, priorities and philosophy, as perceived from the organisational vision statement, mission statement and objectives (Prutina, 2015). Moreover, Geddes (2017) asserts that the culture of the organisation represents the manner of interaction among the members, as well as how they work and interact with the external world as organisational employees. In the contemporary era, companies need to achieve robust results across different dimensions of competitive performance, including innovation as well as quality, with the argument forwarded that only those who can yield greater performance across various dimensions will grow accordingly (Yarbrough et al., 2011). As such, it is imperative for organisations to realise the cultural characteristics associated with performance in various dimensions (Alvesson, 2012).

Organisational culture involves expectations, assumptions, norms and collective memories or stories that impact on organisational strategic decision-making and activities (Pompper, 2014). Culture may even be regarded as including mission statements and logos, and is also reflected in the building designs or office layouts (Grant and Grant, 2016). A sense of identity is conveyed by these factors, and unwritten guidelines are provided about how things should be done. Sometimes, the individual may not recognise the culture or its importance until it is challenged in strategic decision-making within the organisation. It is imperative that a culture is developed that enables the organisation to achieve its objectives (Bass and Avolio, 1994). It must embody shared values to enable the company to perform. For example, for a high-technology company, a culture that encourages adaptability or innovation will be highly beneficial for the organisational performance. However, if the culture of the same company is characterised by stability, respect for tradition and a preference for adhering to procedures and rules, then it might suffer due to this strict culture (Adeinat and Abdulfatah, 2019). In other words, having a culture may enable an organisation to function, but it is imperative that the right culture is developed so that the organisation gains a competitive edge in the market. If the company's culture works against its objectives, then this will be counterproductive for the organisation's performance (Long and Franklin, 2004). In the subsequent section, the role of organisational culture in the strategic decisions made by the organisation is considered.

3.4 The role of organisational culture in organisational strategic decisions

A hierarchical culture that is internally focused is concerned with coordination and control systems, whereas a collaborative culture emphasises interpersonal relationships due to its flexibly-oriented nature (Porcu et al., 2020). An externally focused market culture prioritises the management of competitiveness and customer services, whereas an innovative culture is concerned with the management of innovation, discovery and future opportunities. In this regard, researchers have further identified those opportunities that can be developed through culture, whereby the concept of culture is employed in perceiving the external and internal needs in terms of developing values to guide the organisational growth, while utilising the organisational culture of memory to encode accumulated learning and experience for organisational success (Berthon et al., 2001). There is also a different reaction from each culture with respect to social media initiatives (Kizgin et al., 2020). Organisational culture is socially created, structured and reinforced by its members (Schein, 1999; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). There is a positive relationship between the performance of an organisation and its culture (Deshpandé et al., 1993; Yarbrough et al., 2011). Even a moderate relationship between business performance and organisational culture should not be ignored, since culture is crucial to the organisation's operations (Miller and McTavish, 2014). The leaders of the organisation must realise how the functionality is perceived by the employees of the organisation (Smircich, 1983), and hence how their individual input reflects the core business activities of such organisations (Landells and Albrecht, 2013). Although it may be challenging to change the culture of the organisation, it can be measured and classified according to certain characteristics (Yahyagil, 2015). One of the most widely utilised cultural frameworks (cultural typologies) of the organisation divides different cultures into four broad classes, each typified by a different style of leadership, beliefs and values in regard to effectiveness:

- Internally focused control/hierarchical-oriented cultures
- Internally focused clan or collaborative cultures
- Externally focused market or competitive cultures
- Externally focused innovative cultures

(Ahmadi et al., 2012; Wolniak, 2013; Wronka-Pośpiech et al., 2016)

Group-oriented organisational culture tends to have a well-implemented manufacturing strategy (Bates et al., 1995). The pattern of relationships within the organisation shapes its culture and operational patterns (Kanter and Sherman, 2016). As Pascale (1981) asserts, hard factors based on structure, strategy and the prevalent system, along with soft factors such as capabilities, abilities, associates and group values, impact on organisational strategic decision-making at the functional level (Pascale, 1981). Besides the recommendation that learning factors are a key instrument for perception and decision-making (Berthon et al., 2001), McGuinness and Morgan (2005) emphasise the combination of market and learning orientation to positively influence strategic outcomes. However, both learning processes based on the organisational culture and the implementation of key decisions have been widely researched and are applicable to many Western settings, leaving a gap in the Arab world with its particular cultural setting (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Abalkhail and Allan, 2016).

Culture is creative and dynamic in nature (Annosi et al., 2020). According to Chow and Liu (2009), the development of culture occurs under the influence of the socioeconomic environment and is reflected through values that, along with attitudes, aid in establishing standards and rules that influence members' behaviour and affect the organisational culture (Kuada and Sørensen, 2010). A company's culture embraces its prevalent values, practices, patterns and the features of informal relationships present among associates (Moh'd Al-adaileh et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a need to understand the cultural development of the organisation. Schein (1985) identifies a series of factors (e.g., management, group dynamics and learning) that contribute to the development of the organisational culture and allow the researcher to comprehend the major factors in developing the culture of an organisation. Moreover, Chow and Liu (2009) hold that organisational culture develops through the organisation's historical problem-solving practice. Firstly, the workforce is involved in the strategic practice of working towards common goals, shared cooperation, problem-solving and communication, along with common sense, which guide the company towards new group formation (Madhani, 2015).

When an organisation works through strategic business decisions on a long-term basis, this can shape certain standards, organisational norms and values (Diefenbach, 2009). Group culture can be assessed by understanding the degree of stability, relatedness and complexity of the culture (Kuada and Sørensen, 2010). For this to

occur, time spent as a group is required, with members sharing common experiences (Kizgin et al., 2020). Comprehension of this culture is as important as the mutual relationship between the leaders and their groups (Balthazard et al., 2006). Organisational activity draws inspiration from employees and their inherent skills, knowledge and motivation to enable success. Based on this reality, different skills can relate to individuals' ability to realise group tasks (Fock et al., 2011). Therefore, group analysis and its dynamics are vital to supporting group formation and promote understanding about the organisational culture (Hunt and Weintraub, 2007). The next section explores the impact of organisational culture on strategy formulation and implementation.

3.5 Organisational culture of strategy formulation and implementation

Strategy formulation among organisations has been identified as an outcome of the organisational culture (Bates et al., 1995), while others consider market strategy and cultural orientations as part of the factors that shape decision-making (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Many organisations continue to improve their organisational strategy formulation due to its key relevance in achieving the organisational objectives. Despite researchers considering both formulation and implementation to be interwoven (Bates et al., 1995), the strategy formulation has superseded the implementation (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014), and hence within the cultural context, the sequence is often followed. In most of the literature, strategy formulation typically incorporates organisational culture through the utilisation of planning stages (Bates et al., 1995) that tend to support the implementation via a range of tools, although many organisations do not typically have a specific tool for strategy formulation (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

Organisational culture has been identified as a phenomenon that shapes organisational strategy (Gerry, 1992; Bates et al., 1995), and which tends to shape the structure of the organisation (Miller et al., 2004; McDonald and Foster, 2013) in terms of its activities and the manner in which it manages its stakeholders. Although researchers have established that through the examination of organisational decision-making, the nature of how strategies are adopted and implemented can be explored (Miller et al., 2004). This can further be linked to managerial actions, which can be consistent with expected trends, or changed by the management (Lok and Crawford,

2004; Schneider et al., 2013). Thus we can assess which matters most—managerial actions or organisational context—or what combination of both factors might lead to greater achievement.

Within the context of organisations in the KSA, both strategy formulation and implementation can be affected by national culture, although the national culture of the KSA that is characterised by its high-context nature is more likely to concentrate on formulation than implementation (Hardy, 1996). In this regard, the scope of this study will only involve those organisational characteristics that shape such practices within IMC from the perspective of organisational and national culture shaping the organisation structure as market or hierarchical, according to the competing values framework.

This chapter now turns to the models of organisational culture, with sections 3.6.1, 3.6.2 and 3.6.3 presenting Goffee and Jones's typology, the cultural web and the competing values framework, respectively.

3.6 Models of organisational culture

3.6.1 Goffee and Jones's typology

Four styles of organisational culture were developed by Goffee and Jones (1998): communal, fragmented, mercenary and networked. In order to identify the particular culture, a series of diagnostic tools can be utilised (El Ebrashi, 2017) that are helpful in identifying the organisational culture prevalent in the organisation (Prutina, 2015) and facilitate in identifying the optimum approach for the implementation of strategy, organisational behaviour and structure that can best deliver the organisational demands (Olson et al., 2005). It is also pertinent for the researcher to be aware of attempts to examine, analyse and interpret the existing culture of the organisation, which may be perceived by others as potentially subversive and threatening (Hays, 2012).

The following analysis represents Goffee and Jones's (1998) understanding of the four different organisation culture types typically found in business and industry. No culture is regarded as better than any other, since each culture has both positive and negative attributes (Barney, 2001). Goffee and Jones's (1998) four organisational culture types are observed on the basis of two dimensions: sociability and solidarity. Sociability

represents friendliness among colleagues in an organisation, implying that the workers take actions favourable for each other without expecting something in return (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Sociability is in line with the high orientation of people, the high orientation of team culture and focusing on processes as opposed to outcomes (Russo et al., 2013). Meanwhile, solidarity represents the measurement of task orientation, with high solidarity implying that people can work well together, thus enabling them to achieve common goals even when there are personal conflicts and disputes (Wronka-Pośpiech et al., 2016). As per this scheme of classification, there are four different organisational culture types—communal culture, fragmented culture, networked culture and mercenary culture—as seen in Figure 3-2 and presented below in sections 3.6.1.1–3.6.1.4.

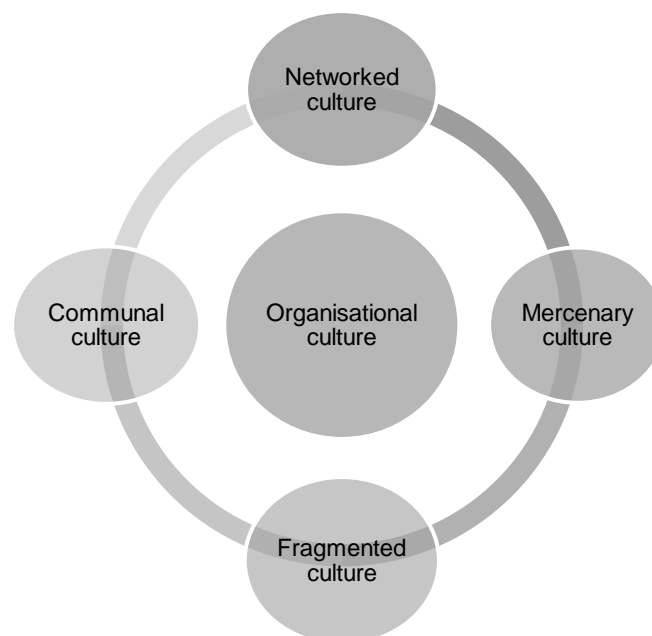


Figure 3-2: Classes of organisational culture (Goffee and Jones, 1998; Ahmadi et al., 2012; Wolniak, 2013; Yahyagil, 2015)

3.6.1.1 Communal culture

Communal culture represents an overriding communal paradigm that combines the mercenary culture’s competitive spirit with the ethical spirit of network culture. Communal cultures are result-oriented, that is, they are keen to gain results but are also concerned with people and processes (Wolniak, 2013). The focus on sociability is high in this culture, in which the commitment has a religious sense for the workers and managers alike. Communal cultures often mould themselves into a single group

or person, and around their particular mission and vision (Ahmadi et al., 2012). Goffee and Jones (1998) provide the example of a start-up company that is focused on providing a singular product or service to its customers. Such an organisation would place particular emphasis on the success of goals and customer services, to propel the product through single services (Tereshina et al., 2016). Moreover, Goffee and Jones (1998) argue that various organisations with a mercenary culture also have an overlap with communal culture. In communal cultures, kindness and friendship are valued cultural and personal traits, but when they relate to the vision and mission of the organisation they are internalised and followed religiously (Sharma and Khokle, 2017).

Goffee and Jones (1998) also suggest that communal culture exists in an organisation until it evolves into another culture. For example, a university may utilise a communal culture during the early developmental stages and then evolve into a network-oriented culture when the organisation achieves maturity. The individuals involved in a communal culture tend to feel empowered at an individual level due to the high degree of collective personality and personal commitment to the organisation (Miller and McTavish, 2014). This is also beneficial in ensuring organisational discipline (Colon-Aguirre, 2015). Such an institution may regard itself as a family. In such a culture, the manager and employees follow up their beliefs with actions as a means of embodying the cultural ideals (Atuahene and Baiden, 2018).

3.6.1.2 Fragmented culture

A fragmented organisational culture is one whereby individualism is highly valued as compared to collectivism, and there is greater independence (Prutina, 2015). Employees in such an environment are considered free agents who are distinct from one another, with specialised skills and the ability to function autonomously with respect to their responsibilities (Buble, 2012). This type of culture is prevalent in organisations with a high risk and fast-paced environment such as advertising, investment banking and high-technology fields (Lok and Crawford, 2004). This type of organisational culture is described by Goffee and Jones (1998) as having low solidarity and low sociability. They also believe that in organisations with a fragmented culture where people work for themselves, individual performances are recognised as contributing towards the progress of the organisation (Mair et al., 2012).

Goffee and Jones (1998) claim that fragmented cultures produce impressive results, although cautioning that managers should be vigilant for negative expressions of fragmentation, whereby the low sociability and low solidarity can ferment unstable organisational outcomes (Zhu and Engels, 2014). HE agencies or marketers should avoid utilising the negative aspects of fragmented culture, which tend to be promoted by academic departments and colleagues (Wolfe and Dilworth, 2015). Therefore, the culture of the university should not be in conflict with the internal culture developed by the organisational members (Trivellas and Dargenidou, 2009), with an understanding of the local culture necessary to adopt strategic decisions within the organisation (Trivellas and Dargenidou, 2009). The various academic functions must consider what cultural values are effective in their position as a component of the broader organisation, as well as the academic processes, so that the ideals of the profession and services can be effectively delivered to the public or customers.

3.6.1.3 Networked culture

A networked culture is characterised by people who know and like each other (Kuada and Sørensen, 2010), whereby people tend to make friends in the organisation or environment in which they are working. In the networked culture, there is a high degree of socialisation (as per the communal culture) between the members of the organisation. This translates into a high degree of commitment, loyalty and emphasis on the organisational goals (Hassard and Holliday, 1998). Significant emphasis is placed on the social interaction of people in this type of culture, with a general perception of collective concern for one another (Feather, 2016). Such organisations place considerable emphasis on facilitating communication and the recognition of individual expression, with the interdependent and interconnected nature of work-oriented activities valued (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010). Differences at the individual level are not particularly significant but have greater meaning at the collective level as the culture reflects daily collective rather than individual interactions. The system of expression and communication is collectivist in nature and is recognised as such. Decisions in this type of culture may take longer than usual but will receive key support from those working in the organisation (Pompper, 2014).

There may be certain qualities in such an environment that appear to be ideal, particularly for service-oriented businesses, but these are not universally applicable.

Some people are not accustomed to a high degree of sociability and may feel uncomfortable in networked cultures (Tierney and Lanford, 2015). Similarly, individuals who have been engaged in highly competitive environments may find it challenging to work in a collective environment. Such individuals encounter a sense of competitive motivation. Such a need is not a personal flaw, but rather such individuals merely do not find satisfaction in a collective environment (Waring and Skoumpopoulou, 2012).

3.6.1.4 Mercenary culture

The mercenary culture is the converse of the networked culture and represents the culture prevalent in the majority of organisations (Sharma and Khokle, 2017). The mercenary culture is ruthless and restless, involving hallmarks of high solidarity whereby there is strong agreement with respect to the organisational goals. The sense of purpose is powerful and shared, with focus on the organisation's strategic goals (Börjeson et al., 2015). Goffee and Jones (1998) assert that a mercenary culture in a positive sense can be highly productive. Such a culture is encouraged among employees, and yet they are required to work collectively to outperform the organisational competition (Atuahene and Baiden, 2018).

The mercenary culture can shift the organisation towards achieving short-term goals without causing any clearly identified damage while the groundwork is being established (Sabri et al., 2013). As per the management of change and organisational shifts, regardless of whether temporary or permanent, there should be careful planning, with the vision of change being clearly stated and promoted throughout the entire chain of command (Boswell, 2015). The culture must be adjusted and monitored so the organisational performance can be calibrated towards the strategic objectives (Cronin, 2001).

Goffee and Jones's typological approach would be optimal for understanding organisational culture in the form of different types of organisational culture and their impact on organisational strategic activities. However, the major thrust of this research is to explore national and organisational culture's impact on development and the implementation of IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. Consequently, Goffee and Jones's typology is not appropriate due to the differentiation between the types of organisation. Additionally, the typologies are limited descriptions of culture

types and their impact on the organisation, and thus would be insufficient to comprehend the similarities and differences in the context of organisational culture's impact on the IMC strategies of selected public and private organisations. Therefore, Goffee and Jones's typological approach is not utilised for this research, since organisational culture may also be explained as comprising the assumptions, beliefs, norms, values, symbols, artefacts, language, actions and patterns understood and shared by the members (Schein, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to understand the major fundamental and integral components of organisational culture and their impact on IMC strategies, rather than to merely identify cultural difference in the selected organisations. Consequently, the cultural web model is pertinent to this research, as discussed in the subsequent section.

3.6.2 The cultural web model

Organisational culture was depicted by Johnson and Scholes (1999) through their cultural web model, which originated as an instrument enabling cultural audit (Johnson, 1992) that is suitable for identifying the nature of an organisation's culture. In spite of the existence of many artefacts or beliefs among organisational staff, particularly those in managerial positions, it is often assumed that certain commonly held beliefs can be found among the majority of managers, regarded as ideation or paradigms (Johnson, 1992). While those beliefs and assumptions could appear to shape the organisational environment, managerial style, leadership nature and operational routines, it is vital to understand that such assumptions could be perceived as representing part of the organisational structure yet differing from the core organisational culture. Although the paradigm consists of such beliefs and assumptions, it is considered by Johnson, (1988) as "preserved and legitimize[d]" in the cultural web model that could define organisational actions, and the power structure in particular. In this sense, the cultural web could be employed to facilitate in understanding the extent to which countries with stronger power structure could implement their IMC strategy. The cultural web tool presented and utilised in this study contains seven inter-connected elements (see Figure 3-3) that constitute a range of behaviours that can be utilised to identify (un)suitable behaviour within an organisation (McAuley et al., 2007). The cultural web model represents a range of hypothesised assumptions regarding an organisation that can assist management in identifying the

major cultural factors and reflect their subsequent influence on strategic problems, discourse and purposeful activities to sustain a competitive advantage in the organisation's market context (Marceau, 2011). The company selects who and what to memorialise in its values, in terms of what is perceived as 'positive behaviour' (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). Interactions in day-to-day lives develop behaviours, determining what is acceptable as culture (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). Organisational symbols include the company's visual representation, such as logos, office layouts and dress codes, whether formal or informal (Hendry and Seidl, 2003).

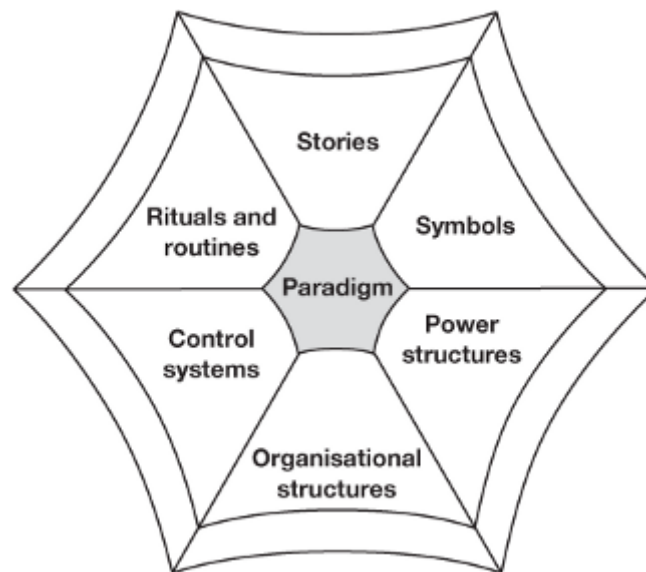


Figure 3-3: The cultural web model (Johnson and Scholes, 1999)

While the cultural web model introduced by Johnson and Scholes (1999) assumes a strong organisational culture, this is not always the case in practice, while there are numerous sub-cultures. As Annosi et al. (2020) indicate, organisations with a general culture are less commonplace. The cultural web propagated by Johnson and Scholes (1999) represents the central dominant culture through the paradigm, which is found in shared values. Regardless of the strength of the central culture, there will always be deviating cultures within the organisation (Faier, 2013).

As the major objective of this research is not to identify or test the impact of the cultural web model components on IMC strategies individually, but to explore the impact of these cultural factors collectively on the development and implementation of IMC strategies in public and private organisations, the discussion of these cultural factors will be undertaken collectively as they are inter-related at some point within the

strategic decision-making context of the organisation. Sections 3.6.2.1, 3.6.2.2, and 3.6.3.3 now consider the routines, rituals and stories, organisational culture, and control and power systems of the cultural web model, respectively.

3.6.2.1 Routines, rituals and stories

When the practices of the organisation take on the level of formality, sacredness and aesthetic value, they become rituals rather than merely routine practices (Pentland and Reuter, 1994). The social aspect of the organisation has been widely studied through the concept of organisational routines, also embedded with organisational rituals (Durkheim, 1961; Goffman, 1967). Organisational scholars increasingly consider the effectiveness and breadth of organisational rituals (Smith and Stewart, 2011), which differ from social practices involving the group identity and values, and from those performed as organisational routines (Islam and Zyphur, 2009). Moreover, Trice and Beyer (1993) observe that organisational rituals represent the expressive and symbolic behaviour of the organisation. The existing literature on the subject highlights organisational rituals in terms of aesthetics, formalities and sacredness, to differentiate them from routine practices and genres (Annosi et al., 2020). In terms of organisational rituals, researchers have focused on exploring how they evolve and are utilised in the organisational setting, as well as their effectiveness (Smith and Stewart, 2011). However, there is an unintended effect and latent meaning of organisational rituals that extends beyond the human intention and exhibits the potential to achieve more than the originally intended target. Such unintended and latent features of rituals are presumed in the organisational history, stories and routines found in the organisational culture (Zerjav et al., 2018).

Routines are critical to understanding the behaviour of the organisation, because the repetition of routines over the passage of time becomes a source of organisational rituals and stories (Feldman and Pentland, 2003). As such, routines are critical to maintaining an organised workforce. Rituals are also perceived to provide the necessary impetus for the organisation and enable the adaptation to new routines (Vough et al., 2017). However, an opposing perspective is that if routines are intentionally targeted for modification then this may not bring about change, while if they are continued over time then gradual change may occur due to their adaptability, in which the workforce adjusts naturally over time whereby such routines become

organisational rituals (Pentland et al., 2011). This highlights that routines can maintain existing practices while introducing change (Grodal et al., 2015). However, over time, the individuals or teams in an organisation tend to depart from routines based on the need for adaptability, because adaptability is grounded in organisational stories, and therefore organisational rituals and stories are fundamental for changing organisational routines (Foss et al., 2012). When such a departure takes place, the actual performance of the individuals or team may change, and such change ultimately necessitates change in routines that is directly linked with the organisation's strategic objectives. This shows that while routines are stable, they are dynamically linked to the organisational objectives (Miller et al., 2012).

Cyert and March (1963) observe that routines are also referred to as the organisation's memory. They represent the practices and rules utilised to address complex and uncertain situations, and for suppressing conflict among the organisational units (Winter and Nelson, 1982). Routines are also called standard operating procedures, which enhance the stability of the activities and operations occurring in the organisation (Cyert and March 1963). The routine performance of tasks involves the automated performance of activities without consideration of the need to change the routine or associated activities (Cohen and Bacdayan, 1994). However, routines are not effective when the situation demands flexibility, reflexivity and an innovative approach. Moreover, routine practices may not be able to address novel situations, as the structural collaboration of the organisation is required (Staw et al., 1981; Gersick and Hackman, 1990; Louis and Sutton, 1991; Ashmos et al., 1998; Spillane et al., 2011; Zerjav et al., 2018).

The literature also shows that routines do not necessarily evolve from the habitual practices of workers, but that these habitual practices are linked through the specific structural arrangements of the organisation (Vough et al., 2017). Moreover, they may not necessarily evolve only at the discretion of the workers, being directed through the proper structural flow of information and instruction within the organisation. Feldman and Pentland (2003) argue that routines may be enforced through directives, arising from the structural processes of the organisation. However, Feldman and Pentland (2003) also argue that adjustments to routines can be made by workers through their performance over time, although this requires permission from the social actors holding power in the organisation. Therefore, routine practices are also directed by the

control system of the organisation. Edmondson et al. (2001) observe that routines can be successfully changed through the collective learning of the workforce based on daily interaction, although these are limited to the structural arrangements of the organisation. Adler et al. (1999) observe that dynamic environments involve specific routines. Highly routinised organisations are also able to flexibly respond to the need for change. However, some organisations feature strict routine practices, such as public organisations operating under fixed government policies and regulations (Bogner and Barr, 2000).

The current research argues that in order to identify those factors that impact upon flexibility in routines to develop and implement any functional-level strategies, it is imperative that a deeper understanding is acquired of the actors that justifies flexibility in routine practices and deviation from the strict adherence to routines, which will help in understanding the organisational routines' impact on the research context of focus in this study.

3.6.2.2 Organisational structure

The organisational structure of the cultural web model is related to the authority and responsibilities in the decision-making (Akroush et al., 2015), and includes the organisation chart and the unwritten lines of authority that offer valued contributions (Senior and Fleming, 2006). Control systems include quality, financial and reward systems (with organisational measurement and distribution) (Laroche, 2011). Traditionally, routines have been referred to as the DAN (Winter and Nelson, 1982) and the memory of the organisation (Cohen and Bacdayan, 1994). The metaphorical emphasis is the persistence and stability of the organisational routines. However, the literature on the subject shows that routines are not as strict as they may appear, with flexibility in routines consequently involving performance improvements (Feldman and Pentland, 2003; Argyris, 2010; Parmigiani and Howard-Grenville, 2011).

Salvato (2009) argues that routines involve ordinary activities, while employee empowerment is based on the organisational structure and control system, and employee confidence in decision-making is based on the organisational history. Feldman and Rafaeli (2002) observe that the connections between the organisation's members symbolically influence the persistence or need for change in routines, while symbolic personalities are also attached to organisational success stories. Therefore,

it can be claimed that organisational symbols and stories interact, and thus impact on the flexibility in routine practices. Van Zee (2009) observes that behavioural elements influence the stability of or need for change in routines, but organisational behaviour is strongly grounded in the organisational stories and symbols. Rerup and Feldman (2011) observe that a trial-and-error learning process dictates change in routine practices, although these trials then become stories in the organisation that can affect the flexibility of its routines.

According to Droge et al. (2004), researchers have adopted an actor–network perspective to argue that routines involve the close networking of human and non-human agencies. Furthermore, there is an increased research focus on organisational routines with respect to the adaptability of individual performances, artefacts and tools (Orlikowski, 2007; Schein, 2018), with technology and its infrastructure regarded as a particular type of artefact that prominently influences the organisational routines (Waterson, 2018).

The concept of integration has been widely studied, yet no formal definition has been offered for integration as a construct (Pagell, 2004). Nevertheless, researchers such as Kahn and Mentzer (1998) highlight the key components of collaboration and integration, and hence consider integration to be “formally defined as a process of interdepartmental interaction and interdepartmental collaboration that brings departments together into a cohesive organization”. Another perspective by O’Leary-Kelly and Flores (2002) suggests that “integration refers to the extent to which separate parties work together in a cooperative manner to arrive at mutually acceptable outcomes” through cooperation, interaction, coordination and collaboration. Despite the various approaches and applications of integration in the context of different industries and levels of hierarchy, which are linked to the arrangements and integration of organisational structure (Frankel and Mollenkopf, 2015), supply chain integration has been underscored as an essential facet of organisational culture (Braunscheidel et al., 2010). Structure is defined as the formal reporting relationships of an organisation, as well as the grouping and systems (Daft, 2010), and is claimed to represent an active link to the concept of integration at both the internal and external levels (Pagell, 2004). Research suggests an internal and external dimension to integration, with internal integration considered across the different sectors of the same organisation, while external integration involves two

different organisations (Pagell, 2004). Internal integration is based on the organisational structure, while external integration is based on the organisational objectives. However, the control and power system directly impact on the external integration of the organisation with the public or other organisations in order to achieve the organisational objectives (Droge et al., 2004; Pagell, 2004; Koufteros et al., 2005; Schein and Schein, 2018). Internal integration represents cross-functional integration, which is concerned with the interaction and collaboration between different organisational operations. This integration is based on the organisational structure for performing routine tasks (Pagell, 2004; Porcu et al., 2017). External integration, on the other hand, involves interaction and collaboration between the organisation and external organisations to successfully achieve the organisational objectives. Integration becomes routine practice when it is repeated or integral to achieving the strategic objectives (Swink et al., 2007; Gallo and Smith, 2014; Vedel, 2016). Moreover, Judson et al. (2008) consider that external branding integration simplifies the customer decision process more effectively than internal integration because internal integration is simply based on the organisational structure, while external integration is based on the organisational control and power system developing and implementing strategic initiatives to create external integration. Internal integration, also referred to as 'cross-functional integration', is key for the organisation to maintain its influence on the external dimensions of integration (Eagle et al., 2007). Therefore, the focus of the current research is on internal integration, which is regarded as a complex task contributing to the development and implementation of IMC strategies in public and private organisations.

Some of the key drivers of interaction have been identified, which include structure, culture and communication (Pagell, 2004), while the importance of structural integration on performance has been shown (Kahn and Mentzer, 1998; O'Leary-Kelly and Flores, 2002). Jeske and Calvard (2021) found that operational performance is improved through cross-functional integration, as it also possesses the capacity for generating external integration. However, the intention of this research is to examine how this integration is influenced by organisational culture, with further impacts on the strategic development and implementation at the functional level.

Although much is known about the variety of routines across different organisational settings (Howard-Grenville, 2005), evidence suggests that despite the benefits of such

cultural change to achieve the organisational objectives, some managers may not necessarily acknowledge such change (Johnson, 1992). This could be as a result of the internal constructs adopted by the organisation to manage change, as opposed to the objective understanding of the gradual changes over time. Such a paradigm is regarded as difficult to change unless evolutionary tactics of implementation are adopted (Johnson, 1988), which is considered an emergent strategy in nature and in terms of its implementation across the organisation (Mirabeau and Maguire, 2014). From another perspective, Hendry and Seidl (2003) provide an approach termed an 'episode', based on Luhman's theory, which could allow a mechanism for the system to suspend its routine structures, while adopting a strategic change based on reflection. This research seeks to explore the gradual evolution of rituals and routines, and their impact on IMC strategies in public and private organisations.

3.6.2.3 Control and power system

Economic and social realms have equated power with force (Hardy, 1996), control and influence (Merlo, 2011), authority and many similar terms; therefore, power is the intensity of control over decision-making (Hardy, 1996). While defining power, it is important to move across all abstraction levels so that any doubt regarding this definition can be eliminated. Resultantly, some common applications of this notion may be overlooked. However, a workable and practical definition must be derived here that is suited to understanding the control system of an organisation (Lok and Crawford, 2004). The definition of power as the potential for change, the creation of intended impact, or "the force that affects outcomes" (Hardy, 1996) has restrictions that reduce its usefulness in decision processes or controlling the decision-making of an organisation. Pockets of real power can involve one or two key senior executives, an entire group of executives, or even a department influencing decision-making, the operational and strategic direction, which could ensure strategic action (Hardy, 1996). Another area of interest is the manner in which power is exercised, which according to the model developed by Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998) involves (i) utilising resources in influencing processes of decision-making, (ii) ensuring the use of power to control access to such decision-making processes, and (iii) legitimising power via cultural assumptions. In the context of this study, power legitimisation through culture

could be an appropriate dimension to explore due to its relevance of power distance in the KSA's national culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Hofstede Insights, 2021).

Landells and Albrecht (2013) provide four dimensions of power: personal, positional, informational and connection. Within the context of the current study, which primarily explores national culture, traits of such power elements could be envisaged across the participants, which could be further utilised in exploring the IMC implementation strategies. The multicultural, global nature of power can be employed to comprehend the individual country's national culture based on the four dimensions proposed by Hofstede (Shackleton and Ali, 1990): the power distance, the concept of uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and collectivism versus individualism. Among these dimensions, power distance and uncertainty avoidance have scored highly in the KSA (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). This is an important narrative in understanding the IMC process under such national culture. The national culture was further considered by Hofstede (1985) as an inclination of the national component of the organisation, which in the case of this study involves university systems under the KSA's system that can be explored to investigate the impact on IMC among such institutions. This could further strengthen our understanding of national culture in the KSA within the context of IMC. The following section considers the third model of organisation culture, namely the competing values framework.

3.6.3 The competing values framework

The concept of organisational attributes is considered as shared beliefs that incorporate leadership styles, with emphasis on the strategic goal and bonding mechanism within the organisation. The competing values framework has established four important traits within the organisational culture, namely clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market orientation, as presented in Figure 3-4 and sections 3.6.3.1–3.6.3.4 below.



Figure 3-4: The competing values framework

It is important to mention that solitary organisational cultures do not exist, with the literature recognising different organisations carrying distinct cultures. Organisations may carry more than one culture simultaneously (Pompper, 2014). Bradley and Parker (2006) propose a classification based on culture types through the competing values framework.

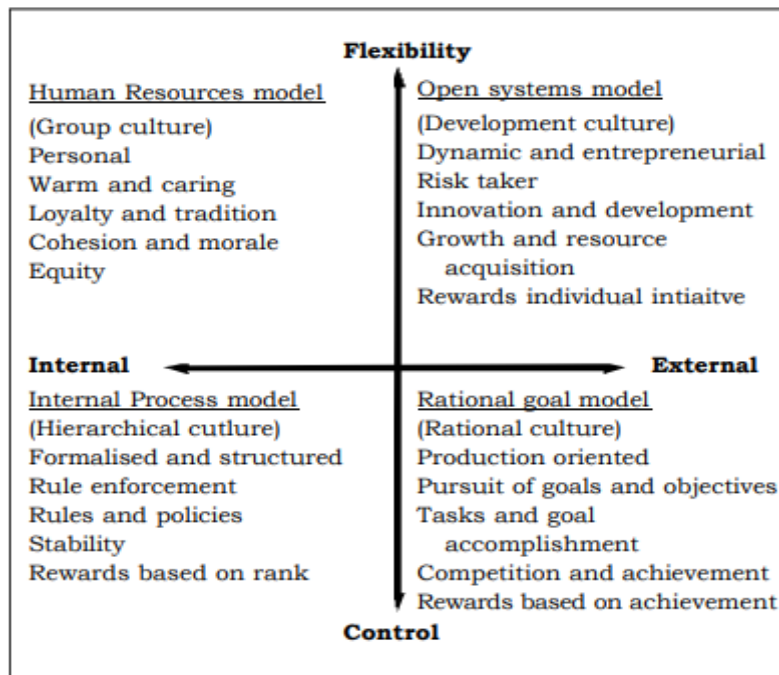


Figure 3-5: The competing values framework (Braunscheidel et al., 2010)

Being widely employed in the literature to examine organisational culture (e.g., Harris and Mossholder, 1996), the competing values framework investigates the competing demands that arise between the internal and external environments that prevail within organisations in terms of control and flexibility, as seen in Figure 3-5 (Braunscheidel et al., 2010). These contrasting demands establish the two values based on the competing model. Organisations thus focus internally to accentuate integration and information management along with communication, and externally to place emphasis on consistent growth, resource attainment and interacting with the external environment (Braunscheidel et al., 2010). On the other side of the conflicting demands, those organisations that focus on control underscore stability and unity, whilst those that focus on flexibility give emphasis to adaptableness and impulsiveness. Combining the two dimensions based on the competing values framework provides a reflection of the four key types pertaining to organisational culture, thereby revealed through theoretical organisational-based analyses (Teegarden et al., 2010). The internal process-based model encompasses an internal focus/control that utilises information and communication-based management in order to attain stability and control (Porcu et al., 2020). This model presents a 'hierarchical culture', as it covers the rules of implementation, conformism, and attending to technical matters (Yarbrough et al., 2011). The internal process-based model provides evidence of a conventional theoretical-based bureaucracy model, as well as public administration that takes its inspiration from a formal compendium of rules, along with procedures, as part of the control mechanism (Ciampa and Dotlich, 2015). The open systems-based model involves an external but flexible focus on the utilisation of readiness and adaptability to attain sustained growth, resource attainment and external support. The model can be employed to explore 'developmental culture' as it deals with innovative and visionary leaders that focus closely on the external environment (Geddes, 2017). As these organisations are dynamic and entrepreneurial in nature, the supposition associated with these leaders is of risk-taking and organisational rewards for individual initiative (Ciampa and Dotlich, 2015). The human relations-based model encompasses an internal, flexible emphasis on developing employee morale and cohesion through training and other human resource development approaches. The said model based on organisational culture is also based on 'group culture', as it takes into account trust and employee involvement through teamwork. In such organisations, managers strive to support and mentor employees (Watson, 2017). The

rational goal-based model involves a control-based external focus that utilises planning and goal setting to attain productivity along with efficiency. The said model on organisational culture is also based on rational culture, as it emphasises outcomes as well as goal fulfilment (Bhaduri, 2019). Such organisations are production-based, with managers encouraging employees to pursue targeted goals with objectives, whereby the outcomes are linked with rewards (Schneider et al., 2013).

The context of the competing values framework can be used to explore different cultural orientations' potential to be characterised by organisational culture, including the clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market orientation, as discussed below.

3.6.3.1 Clan orientation

The clan cultural orientation considers the impact of human relations on teamwork, cohesiveness, employee welfare and loyalty (commitment) (Yarbrough et al., 2011). While this orientation has been seen as a strong cultural orientation linked to employee satisfaction and welfare (Porcu et al., 2020), its significance in terms of HE has not been adequately researched within the KSA. This could provide new insight, particularly in the Arab world where cultural dimensions such as power distance play a significant role (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). Again, comparison between private and public institutions can provide new understanding in the field of communication. Task culture and clan culture are somewhat commitment-centric in nature, highlighting the level of commitment and devotion with which employees perform their responsibilities. In task culture, expert members combine to form a team and perform a particular task or project. On the other hand, clan culture represents a family-like structure where the employees, especially the senior managers, feel obliged to guide and nurture their juniors and subordinates. In both instances, the culture, togetherness and sense of teamwork represent the most prominent features.

3.6.3.2 Adhocracy orientation

The concept of adhocracy involves the attributes of entrepreneurship and flexibility, environmental adaptation, change, growth and expansion (Yarbrough et al., 2011). This orientation has been positively linked to IMC and compared to market culture (Porcu et al., 2017). Hence, adhocracy can be a vital factor in understanding how HE systems in the KSA adapt to such concepts and applications from the IMC perspective.

Adaptive culture and adhocracy culture feature optimally in organisations in terms of employees feeling the freedom to make decisions, propose unique ideas and express their beliefs regarding benefits for the organisation. Change and innovation are appreciated, as well as calls for certain action to be taken. This ensures that the company and employees are adaptive towards change and will not resist adapting their goals when required (Eagle et al., 2007). The main highlights of adaptive and adhocracy culture are innovation, risk-taking attitude and a dynamic entrepreneurial behaviour from the employees' perspective, which improves the organisation's potential to overcome risk.

3.6.3.3 Hierarchy orientation

The hierarchy orientation places emphasis on stability, order, formalisation, continuity and control. While studies have reported the two competing factors of clan (collaboration) and hierarchy (control) (Porcu et al., 2020), they are both pertinent to understanding the nature of IMC among organisations (Berthon et al., 2001). These theories explain the mechanisms and direction of power and information flows throughout the organisation. Although the concepts of clan, adhocracy and hierarchy differ, the connection between them is robust and undeniable. The illustrations of these theories reflect the interconnectedness. In power culture, the control and decision-making powers belong solely to the leader, who is considered the ultimate authority of the organisation and thus is the one who establishes the organisational norms, values and practices.

In role culture, well-defined functional areas are established. Employees are assigned responsibilities in their respective settings and report to their immediate supervisors, who act as the sub-leaders of the organisation (Olson et al., 2005). However, in role culture, people are allowed to share their perspectives and generate results based on combined efforts. Hierarchy culture has a close resemblance to role culture and is highly structured. The main focus of hierarchy culture remains on developing practices that can be remarkably efficient, are stable in nature and focus on the optimum actions, rather than behaviours.

3.6.3.4 Market orientation

While the earlier orientations regard other factors, market orientation considers the direction-setting and accomplishment of goals, which is considered more within the decision-making domain (Yarbrough et al., 2011). This structure describes the codes of conduct from the employees' perspectives. Person and market culture are highly characteristic of the attributes of the treatment given to the employees, customers and community members (Wilson, 2001). Person culture emphasises a horizontal structure that values individuals and employees prior to the organisation itself. It places them at the peak of the organisational structure in terms of their needs, wants and objectives (Abbasi et al., 2021). However, this approach might be challenging to sustain as it threatens the organisational sustainability and can potentially lead to the suffering of organisation losses. The relevant organisational orientation provided by the competing values framework has the potential to characterise the public and private organisations under the scope of the current research based on their cultural dimensions of either hierarchical, clan, adhocracy or market orientation, which could provide significant insight into their IMC implementation, as sought in this study. It is believed that the theoretical background of culture explored in this chapter using the cultural web model, the work of Hall, and the competing values framework, as well as their respective components, could provide appropriate interlinkages within the context of the KSA's public and private HEIs.

The characteristics of the public and private universities explored in this section can be summarised through mapping the identified dimensions on the competing values framework, as shown in Figure 3-6.

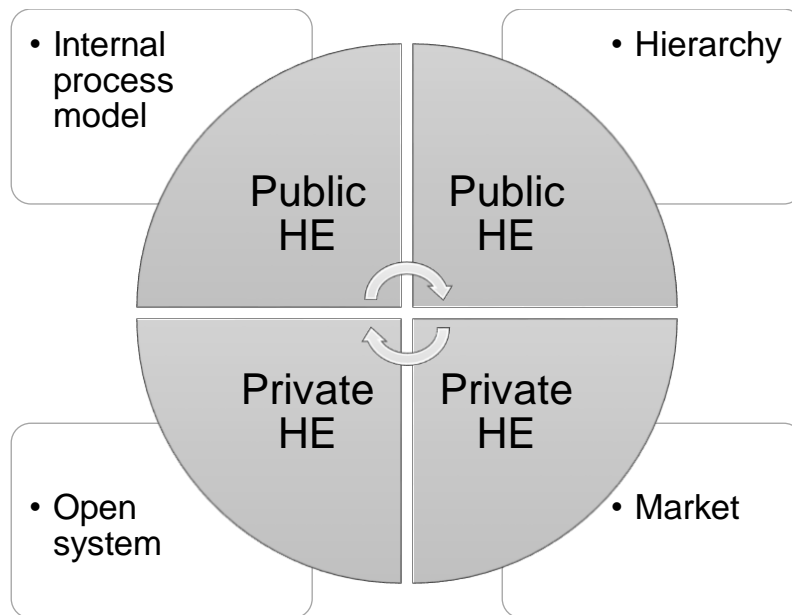


Figure 3-6: HE mapping in the KSA against the competing values framework

The subsequent section considers organisation culture in HE in general, and in the KSA in particular.

3.7 Organisational culture in higher education

HE has been undergoing constant changes in terms of the pedagogy (Lazar et al., 2020), partly due to the impact of the technological tools employed (Habibi and Zabardast, 2020). While organisations continue to adapt the organisational culture to such rapidly changing workspaces globally, differences continue to emerge due to the brand culture that the university intends to project (Judson et al., 2008). Among the many factors shaping the changing culture in HE are globalisation, ranking and funding options (Miotto et al., 2020), and while public universities are more prone to funding deficits from the government (Foroudi et al., 2017), private universities are equally affected by funding due to the changing nature of students' needs and recruitment (Essa and Harvey, 2022), which differ across borders and regions.

Despite the regional variations in such organisational challenges, one common feature in HE is the emergence of digitalisation and technology over time, regardless of the country or region, which has been further accelerated by the recent pandemic (Miani et al., 2021). Hence, regions with huge organisational cultural indices affected by their national culture are more likely to display varying responses to the manner in which

communications are passed in and out of organisations (Baranik et al., 2021), and thus specific focus will be given to the Middle-East region where power distance and uncertainty avoidance are typically ranked the highest globally (Issa et al., 2021).

The KSA's HEIs have been classified into two major groups: (i) publicly funded universities, operating on a non-profit basis, and meeting the educational needs of the KSA's public; and (ii) private universities, operating as profit-driven organisations and exploring all possible and permitted strategies to attract students and staff globally. While the public universities are controlled by the Saudi Ministry of Education and are fully accountable to any changes in national policy and culture, the private universities have certain leverage to operate and compete within the scope of guidance by the Ministry. Similar approaches to public and private HEIs exist among neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Kuwait (Baranik et al., 2021).

The economic stress experienced globally due to the Covid-19 pandemic has also affected the operation and survival of public and private universities, with indications that public universities have had reduced budgetary allocations from government (Miotto et al., 2020), with both private and public universities engaging with technology to deliver their core mandates during the pandemic through online mediums. The branded communication and how students have been engaged during these challenging times have demonstrated the strength of the communications strategies of such universities (Miani et al., 2021). The brand-building culture has been more pronounced among private universities compared to their public counterparts, although the public universities have continued to experience public popularity due to the subsidisation of tuition fees (Judson et al., 2008). Therefore, the current pandemic has been viewed as another factor that has highlighted the significant differences in terms of HEIs' cultural differences, even among Arab countries (Al Lily et al., 2021), which could lead to new insight on how culture and communication are interlinked.

The next section concludes this chapter with a summary of this review of organisational culture

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the concept of culture, its origin, theories, and applications, and specifically organisational culture and its interrelationships in the workplace, public

spaces and generally among HE settings. The cultural web model and the competing values framework have been adapted in this study in terms of understanding the organisational culture in different types of culture, and the impact of organisational strategic activities in the KSA on the development and implementation of IMC.

The next chapter discusses the literature on IMC and the role of organisational culture in developing and implementing IMC strategies.

Chapter 4

Literature Review: Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies

4.1 Introduction

Having explored the relevance of culture and its implications for organisational development in the previous chapter, this chapter introduces IMC strategies, and their related frameworks and models, which will support the understanding of the impact of culture and IMC implementation. The objective of this chapter is to highlight IMC implementation strategies using the RABOSTIC, 4-pillar and 4-stage models, and discuss how such models support different IMC strategies in different organisations. Considering that the scope of this research is HEIs in the KSA, this chapter provides a background and considers the similarities and nuances in IMC, with a focus on private and public HEIs. A critical review of recent developments in IMC in the KSA's HEIs is conducted, before identifying a suitable model for exploring this context, characterised previously as a unique organisational culture shaped by the KSA's national culture. First, this study considers the origins of IMC.

4.2 Origins of IMC

Since its inception in the 1990s, researchers and practitioners have engaged in debate to define and explain the concept of IMC (Porcu et al., 2017), particularly after it was highlighted by the American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1989 (Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017). Wilson and Gilligan (2012) assert that although the concept has been widely utilised by marketers, there is a lack of consensus among researchers and practitioners regarding the definition of IMC, and therefore researchers have focused on refining and further explaining the concept (Porcu et al., 2012). While researchers also indicate a lack of agreement concerning the scope of the concept, there is a consensus that IMC concerns the integration of marketing communications activities to achieve the strategic objectives of marketing communication (Caywood et al., 1991; Schultz and Schultz, 1998; Swain, 2004; Kitchen, 2005; Kliatchko, 2005, 2008;

Madhavaram et al., 2005; Kliatchko and Schultz, 2014). The concept is widely recognised as an effective approach in the current complex multichannel environment, although the lack of a conceptual framework obstructs the adoption of valid measurement scales (Porcu et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the broader applicability of IMC can suit many organisational settings.

The origins of IMC can be traced back to 1980, when emphasis on marketing communications began to increase in the literature. For example, Kerr et al. (2008) highlight the broad range of marketing communication channels as a part of IMC. However, it is important to note that despite the relationship between PR, marketing and advertising recognised at that time, the integration of these fields had not yet been conceptualised. The conceptualisation of IMC commenced in the 1990s, led by Duncan and Everett (1993), Schultz (1996) and Kitchen and Schultz (1999), who claimed that IMC provided an integrated and strategic direction to marketers with respect to marketing. An IMC-based study conducted by the American Productivity Quality Centre in 1997 was amongst some of the initial research. Rather than considering that advertising agencies were making efforts to employ IMC, that study focused on those organisations where IMC was actually employed. Twenty-two national companies were analysed, and all were found to be practising IMC to varying degrees. However, due to their specific setting, the study findings tended to portray US culture, which could ultimately influence the IMC practices of such organisations.

Some researchers argued that IMC was in essence already present, and that it was simply being integrated (Kim et al., 2004), whereas others claimed that it was introduced as an innovative approach to marketing (Duncan, 2002; Kliatchko, 2005). The concept attracted attention when the faculty of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Illinois conducted seminal research on IMC in 1991 (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000). PR and advertising agencies immediately picked up on the concept, aiming to introduce it into practice and add value to their business activities (Wightman, 1999). Other studies, however, indicated that such an advertisement approach is not limited to organisations, but also applicable for national communication strategies (Ots and Nyilasy, 2017). It was thus in the late 20th century that IMC emerged, and since then, its significance has consistently increased (Hartley and Pickton, 1999; Cornelissen, 2001; Grove et al., 2007). Due to the effects of IT, multiple changes have arisen in the marketing communications domain that have

enhanced the implementation of IMC (Kitchen et al., 2004). The multiplication of different media channels, decentralisation of markets across the globe, and rapid increase and reach of the Internet are just some of the many facets in which technological innovation has impacted consumers worldwide (Peltier et al., 2003; Reid, 2003; Pilotta et al., 2004). This has emphasised the call for service culture, as well as internal marketing, to interface with organisational behaviour (Gronroos, 1990), which can be utilised to improve communications.

The underlying premise of the theory is that each audience of focus should be targeted using one basic communications strategy, which is then employed to utilise different communication channels to execute each communication function (e.g., PR, advertising and sales promotion) (Duncan and Everett, 1993). In the early 1990s, Tortorici (1991) argued in favour of IMC, claiming that it was the most efficient strategy for increasing the return on investment. The utilisation of the concept also gave rise to debate over whether it was a fleeting management trend (Cornelissen, 2000), or rather a valid theoretical concept (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000). IMC has also been classified as a strategic business process involving strategic, message and organisational integration. Message integration represents the consistency of personality, images, themes, tone and messages across all channels of the marketing communication. However, researchers argue that IMC is distinguished by strategic integration as compared to marketing communication (Duncan, 2002; Kerr, 2009). Kerr and Patti (2015) established a strategic integration tool whereby efficiency can be maximised, strategy aligned, and the corporate mission promoted. This determination was based on the key features of strategic IMC that include strategic alignment, culture and communication, organisational structure and IMC capabilities. Porcu et al. (2012) observed that IMC's key features include the strategic integration of interactivity, organisational culture and long-term relationships. In the modern era, digital intervention has increased the number of platforms available for interactivity and integration (Racat et al., 2021), and hence has significantly extended the means through which customers can be accessed (Mathew and Soliman, 2021). With the help of digital platforms (e.g., social media), organisations can connect with a large number of customers simultaneously and build long-term customer relationships. This has led to significant improvements in marketing communications (Foroudi et al., 2017;

Turner, 2017) as a means of increasing the access to customers, which can be vital when managed by an organisation as part of their strategy.

Moreover, organisations can organise cross-functional planning based on data-sharing platforms, although having a clear understanding of IMC is regarded as a vital skill (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017) to be employed in such collaborative planning activities. Communications are now data-driven, since organisations can target audiences based on their preferences as determined from social media platforms. The earlier phase of digital intervention enabled organisations to achieve cross-functional planning and engage with multiple stakeholders simultaneously (Mathew and Soliman, 2021). Nevertheless, in the 21st century, IMC has continuously evolved, particularly due to advances in digital technologies (Mathew and Soliman, 2021), with educational settings in the Middle East recognising IMC's relevance in educational delivery (Lazar et al., 2020), although research has rarely captured its impact on marketing communications. IMC has also enabled organisations to connect with both internal and external stakeholders simultaneously, and integrate the different functions of the organisation with the help of digital platforms, although the manner in which public and private sector organisations utilise technology may differ to some extent (Dajani and Mohamad, 2016). Countries with strong national cultures could portray wider differences to technology acceptance.

Researchers have adopted the view that in the current era, IMC is the most influential concept for marketing management (Porcu et al., 2020). Despite the initial function as a tactical tool for marketers, IMC's scope has now increased to include the marketing communications landscape, such as sales promotions and PR. IMC is thus now regarded as a strategic instrument to develop brand equity and build customer relationships. Kitchen et al. (2004) and Porcu et al. (2012) report that IMC is more than simply a tool for marketing communications and can be considered a strategic brand-management instrument whereby brand equity can be enhanced. It is regarded as a strategic tool for delivering attitudinal and memory benefits (Garretson and Burton, 2005; Madhavaram et al., 2005). Meanwhile IMC improvement is increasing as a result of the technological advances in communications (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010; Racat et al., 2021), media and marketplaces (Foroudi et al., 2017). With the origins of IMC now established, the following section explores the notion of IMC evolution as a process.

4.3 The evolution of IMC as a process

IMC is defined by Schultz (1993) as a concept whereby different marketing communication channels are planned, and the strategic role of various communication disciplines is evaluated to gain consistency, clarity and greater influence. Kliatchko (2005) observes that the planning and executing of marketing communications are processes that need to be approached in the same manner to meet the organisational objectives. Schultz (1992) defines IMC as being directed at customers through the management of all information sources with respect to the organisation's products or services and exposing the customer to information through all mediums of communication. This has the effect of inducing consumer buying behaviour. Therefore, IMC is regarded as an ongoing process that can be managed and controlled, and which should lead to long-term behavioural changes among consumers. IMC should also be focused on establishing a relationship between the brand and the customer to induce customer loyalty (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2012).

The IMC process begins with the customer at the centre of the process, around whom different communication programmes are initiated (Schultz, 1993). Schultz (1993) defines IMC as a strategic business process employed in developing, planning, executing and evaluating coordinated marketing communications programmes relevant to internal and external audiences. For Naik and Raman (2003), IMC is a plan or programme that executes different marketing activities in a consistent manner so that their total effect is greater than the sum of each activity (Andreas et al., 2014). IMC represents a strategy whereby different communication tools such as PR, advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion and personal selling are combined to maximise the impact of communications on a target audience (Rufer, 2014). IMC is also regarded as a management concept employed for developing a unified approach that incorporates the various aspects of marketing communications such as PR, sales promotions, direct marketing and advertising (Šerić et al., 2014).

IMC is regarded as a concept in the current literature, which places emphasis on the integration of the different functions of marketing communications to convey a unified message in a consistent manner (Eagle et al., 2007; Porcu et al., 2020). Not only are different marketing communication techniques integrated under the concept of IMC, but also different mediums to deliver one core message (Baidya and Maity, 2010). For

example, advertising could be combined with PR, or billboard advertising could be combined with public-transport-based advertising media. In other words, the individual effect of a marketing channel is enhanced through the combination of all such individual channels, which is referred to as 'synergy'. This perspective regards IMC as agency, with the marketing communications mix under this approach managed in an integrated manner (Dapi et al., 2014). Thus, separate practices are combined so that an integrated approach can be developed whereby a unified message can be projected to customers through different marketing mediums (Mihart, 2012).

The communication between manufacturer and customer was traditionally unidirectional, that is, it travelled from the marketer to its end-destination of the consumer (Schultz, 1993). However, the demands of customers have evolved over time, since they have started to become knowledgeable about markets and expect two-way communications, especially during challenging periods as a means of reinforcing marketing communications (González et al., 2021), while others have reported the transformation of marketing communications into the concept of co-creation (Panigyrakis and Zarkada, 2014), whereby marketers may arrive at a decision by considering numerous sources of information. It is imperative that marketers respond to the questions raised by customers (Finne and Strandvik, 2012), and it is now crucial for marketers to develop a communication plan where the consumer is included from the outset. Marketers must obtain accurate information regarding the needs and wants of customers, which is referred to as an outside approach in the IMC taxonomy (Hartley and Pickton, 1999; Schultz and Schultz, 2003; Kitchen, 2005). A significant result of IMC is that all communications utilise a combined approach to tools, at least in terms of the organisation, which are integrated to form a synergy effect (Taylor, 2010).

Another prominent force behind IMC is the decentralisation of markets, besides the traditional centralised systems, which were gradually transformed by direct consumer–seller interactions (Gronroos, 1990). Markets are now influenced by the lifestyle choices of customers, as well as their incomes, education and behaviours, while customers are highly informed due to the Internet, print and broadcast media (Vashist, 2018). Research identifies that purchase decisions are made by customers on the basis of information they receive and the perspectives they consequently develop (Pagell, 2004). Therefore, it is critical for the company to project the optimum

information and maintain their image in order to ensure their competitiveness in the market (Schultz, 1993; Herrington et al., 1996; Stewart, 1996; Hartley and Pickton, 1998; Gould et al., 1999; Fill, 2000; Jin, 2003).

Porcu et al. (2017) note that researchers and practitioners agree on the multidimensionality of IMC. The different definitions provided by researchers offer insight into the dimensions forwarded (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Schultz and Schultz, 1998; Kliatchko, 2005, 2008; Porcu et al., 2012; Porcu et al., 2017). Moreover, it can be argued that the concept has evolved over time due to advances in communication and marketing technologies. This argument is supported by Kliatchko (2005), who proposes four dimensions of IMC to achieve strategic marketing communication objectives: the integration of stakeholders, content, channels and results. This view is shared by Kliatchko (2008) and Porcu et al. (2012), in that IMC is principally concerned with the integration of all marketing communications through different channels, the conciseness of the content, and other marketing communications activities to achieve final results that realise the marketing's strategic objectives.

The significance of IMC has become increasingly recognised as a business process in the 21st century, with its value acknowledged by internal and external audiences. Schultz and Schultz's (2004) definition is employed by Edmiston (2008) in describing integrated brand communication. However, the focus of Kliatchko's (2005) definition is not simply on individual groups of stakeholders, but rather perceives the groups as a collective audience.

Researchers argue that a universal definition of IMC is unrealistic, given the ever-evolving nature of IMC and its different characteristics, which are modified and supplemented over time (Phelps and Johnson, 1996; Stewart, 1996; Kliatchko, 2005). Nevertheless, critical analysis of prominent definitions of IMC (Low, 2000; Kitchen et al., 2004) reveals that researchers identify five common attributes, including that consumers should be the focus of all communication efforts, and that an outside-in approach needs to be adopted (i.e., when developing a communications strategy, the customers should be the starting point). Researchers agree that it is vital to develop a well-established relationship between the customer and company, and to deliver messages effectively in all communications activities by integrating contact points into

the strategy, while IMC should be adopted by an organisation to create a competitive brand, coordinating between communications disciplines as required (Low, 2000; Kitchen et al., 2004).

In the broader context, IMC represents the coordination of all brand sources to connect the company with its actual and potential customers. This provides a useful concept due to its aim of communication consistency (Fill and Turnbull, 2019). The coordinated approach clearly projects the organisational message to the customers, and thereby facilitates in the development of brand equity (Belch and Belch, 2004). However, existing models for developing the promotional mix do not take branding into account, despite it being a component of the IMC definition. A unified strategic idea is conveyed by a promotional mix based on the marketing objectives (Fill and Turnbull, 2016).

Caywood et al., (1991) and other researchers of that time regarded IMC as a concept that consolidated the impact of promotional mix elements in a tactical manner, provided that the unification of elements occurred (Cornelissen, 2000; Fill, 2002; Naik and Raman, 2003; Cook, 2004). IMC represents a concept of planned marketing communications, whereby a comprehensive plan is developed to evaluate the strategic roles of different communications disciplines (e.g., direct response, general advertising, PR and sales promotion). These are then combined to provide consistency and clarity, and ensure the maximum communication impact (Caywood et al., 1991). Modern definitions add value to these definitions by highlighting additional factors in the contemporary, digital world (Schultz, 2004). IMC represents a process and concept whereby the audience are strategically managed, involving result-oriented programmes of brand communications through different channels over time (Kliatchko, 2005).

This development of IMC represents a shifting from one-way to interactive marketing, due to digital technologies, and particularly the influence of the exponential growth occurring in the IT domain (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017). Porcu et al. (2017) observe that although a number of researchers use the term IMC, they may refer to different dimensions of marketing communications, described as follows:

- *Integration as content* represents the consistency and links between marketing messages and media. When the marketing communications mix is consistent, this enhances the efficiency of communications, and as such brand equity is

enhanced (Schultz, 1993; Keller and Aaker, 1998; Madhavaram et al., 2005). This dimension represents a vital link between technology and IMC, as digital technology provides a means for composing appropriate content via digital tools and disseminating such marketing information to the intended target customers. One such tool is the use of social media platforms in HEIs' marketing communications (Kizgin et al., 2020; Issa et al., 2021) that provide easy access for marketing media communications, which this study considers an important IMC strategy among HEIs.

- *Integration as a process* involves functional and organisational mechanisms that aim to align the communications activities of specialists. It also includes the management of duties and processes that communications experts have developed with respect to the organisation (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000). This dimension highlights the relevance of the organisational culture in managing IMC activities through appropriate recruitment and retraining to deliver effective communications. In the context of this study, the focus is on exploring the available expertise in both private and public HEIs, the management and alignment of IMC activities, and the extent that the national and organisational culture has influenced such strategies.
- *Integration as creation and development* indicates the establishment of long-term relationships in the market. Integration represents the development of a system for managing relationships with all of the stakeholders through interactive and direct contact (Duncan, 2002). This dimension involves identifying appropriate communication interaction within and outside the organisation. Within the scope of this study, the engagement of external stakeholders to support IMC activities or internally recruiting and developing skill sets could be explored in the KSA's HEIs.

Having considered how IMC evolves as a process, this chapter now considers IMC's value for organisations and their stakeholders.

4.4 The value of IMC

The main significance of IMC is that it (i) takes into account all the target stakeholders (Kliatchko, 2005; Turner, 2017), (ii) fosters individual communication, and (iii) helps in

achieving effectiveness, competitiveness and profitability (Porcu et al., 2019). Research conducted in New Zealand and the UK highlights that IMC has brought value to customers (Eagle et al., 2007). Some researchers have highlighted the image-related and consumer behaviour-related advantages of IMC, as well as the advantages of high-brand value achieved through improved customer relationships as a result of IMC (Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017). These important benefits are realised through the strategic integration of stakeholders, messages and interactivity processes. Other IMC advantages include the capacity to strengthen the promotional mix components, such as PR, advertising and sales promotion (Eagle et al., 2007), where increased performance occurs when such components are integrated (Einwiller and Boenigk, 2012; Luxton et al., 2015; Porcu et al., 2019). Overall, research shows that a higher level of IMC integration leads to increased organisational performance, an argument echoed by Porcu et al. (2019) who found that IMC yields customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty. Thus, IMC offers value in terms of improving efficiency and communications activities across departments and positions within an organisation.

IMC is most useful for those institutions where there is an abundance of marketing channels, and where the organisation must strive to fulfil the needs of customers while also working to establish long-term relationships. IMC enables marketers to create and coordinate different marketing messages and integrate these to deliver one core message to all customers from different marketing channels (Wurtz, 2005). The value of the concept is its strong emphasis on the significance of different groups of stakeholders, and customer loyalty. Success in this area can only be achieved through the strategic building of customer relationships (Cornelissen, 2000; Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Taylor, 2010). However, the majority of the empirical research has involved PR and advertising agencies based in the US, and the use of quantitative methodologies (Miller and Rose, 1994; Beard, 1996; Kitchen and Schultz, 2003; Peltier et al., 2003), with few studies focusing on the European context (Low, 2000; Cornelissen, 2001). This chapter now turns to the different IMC models, with the subsequent section introducing three such models with potential for applicability in this study.

4.5 IMC models

Since much of the existing IMC research has been conducted with respect to advertising agencies, there is a paucity of focus on the application of IMC from the clients' perspective (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017), and therefore understanding IMC implementation from the perspective of the staff involved in marketing communications could provide new insights, although the integrated nature of IMC renders its implementation complex, especially where the concept is not well understood (Eagle et al., 2007; Kerr et al., 2008). Researchers argue that few organisations have achieved the complete integration of marketing communications (McGoon, 1999; Kitchen and Schultz, 2003; Kitchen and Li, 2005), with low integration linked to a lack of understanding (Kerr et al., 2008). In order to gain advantages from IMC, it is vital that the entire organisation understands how IMC functions and its plans are actioned. If this is not achieved, then the full implementation of IMC will be challenging, with implications for the customer–brand relationship (Novelli, 1989; Gould et al., 1999; Davison et al., 2005; Duncan, 2005; Reid, 2005). In this section, the implementation potential of IMC models is explored (Schultz and Kitchen, 2000; Fill, 2002), with the benefits and drawbacks of three models reviewed, and a discussion then outlining the reasons for employing the model developed by Kitchen and Schultz (2001).

4.5.1 The IMC RABOSTIC model

Broderick and Pickton (2005) developed the IMC RABOSTIC model (see Figure 4-1), where the first required stage involves an assessment of the organisation in the market, also referred to as 'market research and analysis'. Feedback from previous campaigns in marketing communications and their outcomes must be considered to determine the target audience. In the next stage, the allocation of the budget occurs, and the available resources are reviewed (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). Thereafter, the organisational objectives are established, and a strategic plan is prepared. Upon determining the organisational aim, decisions must be made at the operational level. Moreover, communication tools must be selected in order to utilise them in a tactical manner. Finally, it is essential to monitor and analyse the performance of the new campaign for requisite changes with respect to the marketing communications plan (Broderick and Pickton, 2005).

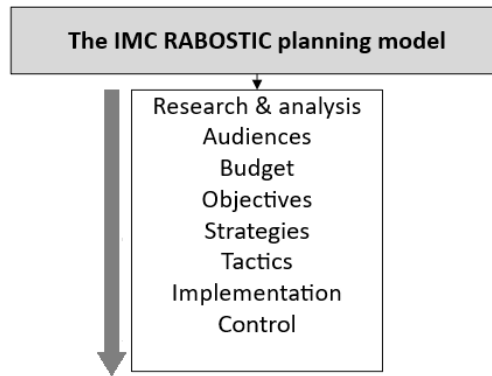


Figure 4-1: The IMC RABOSTIC model (Broderick and Pickton, 2005, p.14)

Despite the greater detail in this model concerning the IMC planning stage, a lack of stages regarding IMC implementation is apparent (Cornelissen and Harris, 2004). Therefore, the model highlights the overall aim of IMC as opposed to the stages through which it can be applied in the organisation, or to enable the further control and evaluation of IMC strategies. Within the scope of the current study, which seeks to explore IMC implementation among public and private sector HEIs, factors that focus on IMC implementation are considered more suitable. Further, the IMC RABOSTIC model provides few details regarding the sequence of individual stages and whether they can be interchanged (Jakus, 2018). Since the model only concentrates on implementing marketing communications campaigns, it does not reveal how IMC can be employed and evaluated as a long-term approach in an organisation (Henley, 2001). Moreover, while the model could be helpful for the purposes of this research due to the significant elements that would support the exploration of IMC practices in public and private sector universities in the KSA, it does not cover the overall aim of the research, which seeks to explore the development and implementation of IMC strategies.

The private sector is profit-oriented, with funding sought from private investors who are interested in furthering the corporate objectives of the organisation (Johnson and Scholes, 1999). The interest generated through seeking investors via marketing and PR activities is created by the marketing department, which is responsible for building reputation and creating a comprehensive plan. This attracts investors to the organisation by generating interest, to the point that they are ready to fund the organisation (Tworzydło, 2016). Meanwhile, the public sector is dependent on

government funding in order to remain adequately functional, and therefore the implementation of different strategies in the two organisational types is quite different. The public sector involves what would otherwise be regarded as public services and local bodies for the implementation of its strategies. The integration of IMC activity will thus be quite different in public and private sector organisations. Therefore, although the IMC RABOSTIC model is a vital model at the IMC planning stage, this study considers the existence of IMC among KSA universities, and hence explores the development and implementation of the existing IMC, which is why the IMC RABOSTIC model is not selected for this study. The next section explores the 4-pillar model.

4.5.2 The 4-pillar model

Despite the robustness of IMC and its relevance in marketing communications, it has continued to evolve over time, with modification of the construct to capture new concepts and elements. Through a modified definition of IMC, Kliatchko (2008) developed the 4-pillar model that provides four distinct elements through which IMC is defined and represented (see Figure 4-2). As the IMC implementation process involves timescale and interconnectedness (Turner, 2017), the process is cascaded using the four pillars.

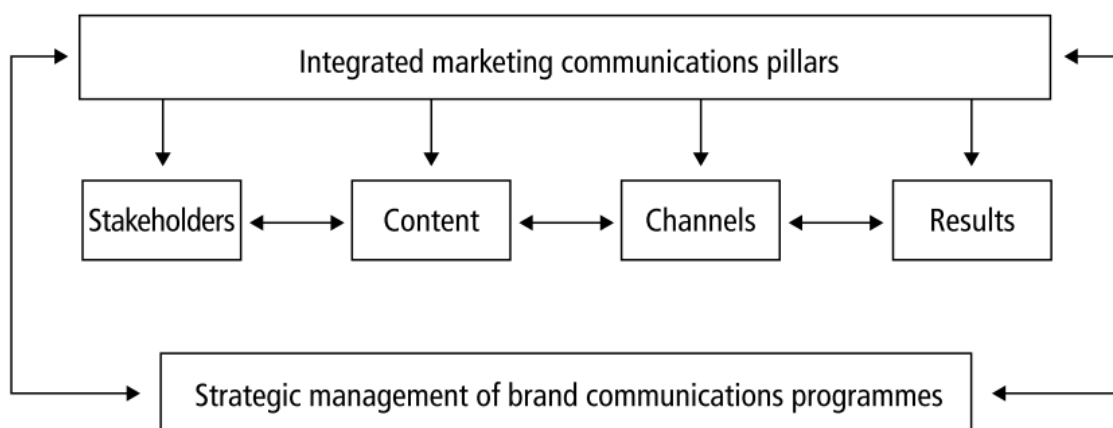


Figure 4-2: The 4-pillar model (Kliatchko, 2008)

The main relevant aspects of the four pillars—stakeholders, content, channels and results—and the highlights of their relevance in the implementation of IMC are discussed in sections 4.5.2.1–4.5.2.4 as follows.

4.5.2.1 Stakeholders

IMC incorporates a large range of stakeholders within its framework, who are considered both internal (e.g., staff, management and students) and external of the organisation (e.g., collaborators, parents, the community and the global HE environment) in the context of this study. While there has been continued effort to strengthen the perceptions of HE held by internal stakeholders (e.g., students) through appropriate technologically innovated communication channels such as Blackboard (Miotto et al., 2020), such efforts have become more pronounced during the recent Covid-19 pandemic (Miani et al., 2021). It is important to understand the relevance of the cultural attitudes of staff in such IMC endeavours, and particularly in Middle Eastern HE where national culture has continued to provide new insights into its effect on HEIs communication strategy.

4.5.2.2 Content

The content of any communication is a vital aspect of IMC implementation (Porcu et al., 2017), with a range of methods utilised to provide communication content, including the use of logos, social media, websites and names (Foroudi et al., 2017). However, despite the importance of comprehending the relevance of national cultural norms in presenting the content of IMC, especially for HE in the KSA, organisational strategies that are utilised by the IMC personnel, and how such strategies are designed, approved and funded constitute the focus in this study, rather than the communication content alone. This is achieved by considering the country's unique national culture, and especially regarding the power distance and uncertainty (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007), which continue to influence significant event management in the KSA's HEIs.

4.5.2.3 Channels

In order to communicate, a channel is usually adopted by the organisation to convey the communication. Previously, television, newspapers and radio were adopted for

IMC (Kliatchko, 2008). More recently, communications channels have increased in sophistication in terms of the speed of communication through social media, websites and other digital technology applications (Porcu et al., 2017; Kizgin et al., 2020; Vizcaíno et al., 2021). While it is vital to employ the appropriate channels for communication, researchers have provided two distinct criteria, namely, relevance and preference (Kliatchko, 2008), in deciding the optimum communication channel. In the KSA, for example, despite the penetration of various media channels, it can be argued that their usage still faces social acceptance challenges, most likely due to the national culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Abu-Farha et al., 2021).

4.5.2.4 Results

In adopting IMC across an organisation, results are the prime target. Although the outcome of IMC strategy is considered a major hallmark of its success, the measurement of outcomes has been the subject of argument among researchers and practitioners (Kliatchko, 2008; Porcu et al., 2017). Moreover, the manner in which IMC results are viewed differs significantly between public and private organisations, and particularly among HEIs (Foroudi et al., 2017). In this study, emphasis is placed on the relevance for cultural implications, rather than the measurement of IMC in HE.

In summary, although the 4-pillar model provides key elements of IMC, this study intends to explore organisational culture in relation to national culture in the implementation of IMC, whereas the 4-pillar model only provides the key elements rather than the implementation stages, and hence the model is not considered for use in this study. The following section explores the 4-stage model.

4.5.3 The 4-stage model of IMC

Kitchen and Schultz (2001) conducted research that focused on advertising agencies, while instances of best IMC practices were examined by the American Productivity and Quality Center, led by (Schultz and Schultz, 1998). These studies identified a 4-stage model (see Figure 4-3) to facilitate understanding of the process of IMC development with client organisations.

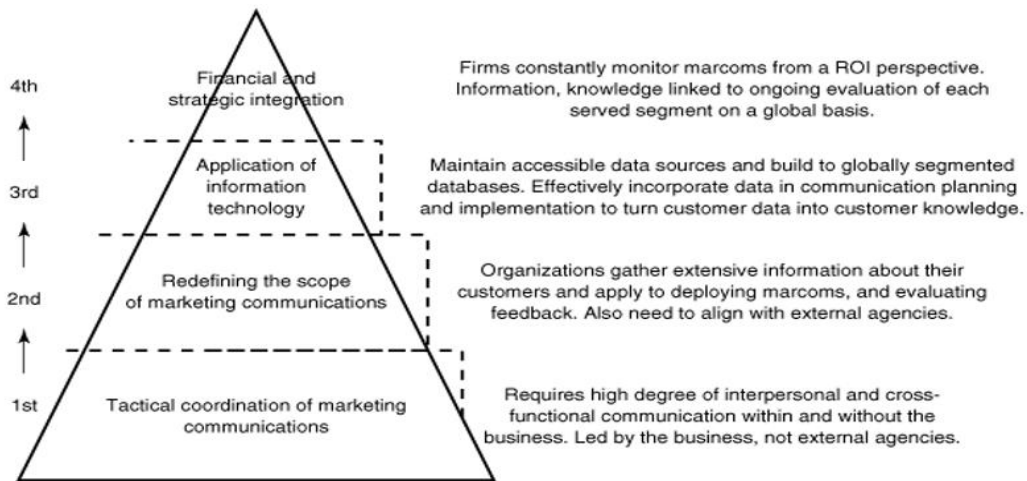


Figure 4-3: The 4-stage model of IMC (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001, p.108)

As shown in Figure 4-3, the first stage in integrating the approaches is to coordinate tactically (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001), which is helpful in order to comprehend the differences in coordination and integration of the different IMC activities, such as open days and social media marketing, in public and private universities. The aim is to generate harmony between the different tools of communication and the service. This approach is also referred to by Kliatchko (2005) and Eagle et al. (2007) as ‘one sight, one sound’. In the KSA, private universities have greater tactical control of coordinating their marketing communications as compared to public universities, where the control lies with the Ministry of Education and the government’s universal policies for all universities. Sections 4.5.3.1–4.5.3.7 now consider the major components of the 4-stage model.

4.5.3.1 Financial and strategic integration

Financial and strategic integration is one of the major elements of the 4-stage model that has a significant influence on the integration of an organisation’s marketing communications strategies (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). Lee et al. (2015) assert that the financial and strategic integration of any department is based on the organisational structure. Moreover, Gulati (2007) claims that when an organisation develops a customer-oriented structure, then it may have to formulate functions that repeat inter-departmentally, leading to increased operational costs. Homburg and Pflesser (2000) state that financial and strategic integration complicates organisational decision-

making. This factor could play an important role within the scope of the current study in terms of exploring the integrated nature of marketing communications events through the alignment of financial and strategic goals. When a company decides to modify their organisational structure towards a more customer-oriented focus, increased cost will be incurred in terms of marketing, research and administration, signifying the importance of such factors in accomplishing new customer-oriented objectives for an organisation (Kolb, 2013).

4.5.3.2 Application of technology

The application of technology in IMC is also a major factor, with advanced technology applied to achieve the organisation's communication objectives (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). Tsai (2001) asserts that the application of advanced technology in IMC is linked to the capabilities of the marketing department, which may facilitate or discourage the application of advanced technology in marketing communications. If the organisation is centrally structured, then the decision-making capability is relatively concentrated at higher levels, which reduces the power of departments and hinders their decision-making ability (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). An improved system of communication requires proper and viable vertical communications, because whenever a decision is required, employees need to ensure the approval of the higher management (Tsai, 2001). Conversely, for organisations with a decentralised structure, decisions depend on individuals or groups located throughout the entire workforce. When considering horizontal communication, ideas are primarily generated from the lower levels, and conveying them to higher levels is quite complicated (Porcu et al., 2017), making this a drawback of a firm that is structured horizontally.

Hooley et al. (2008) assert that the use of advanced technology in marketing is directly linked with the financial and intellectual capability of the marketing department, which is also connected to its structural power within the organisation. Despite social media's remarkable influence on customers and the building of healthy relationships, there are still concerns surrounding the use of such media for business purposes that are linked to strategic integration at the organisational level, and which should be embedded with an advanced level of technology (Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2014). At the same time, the formation of existing frameworks was undertaken long before the emergence of social media, as noted by Schultz (1996), and Schultz and Schultz (1998). According

to Porcu et al. (2012), the information gathered via traditional IMC frameworks is not applicable when considering social media, and the exploration of IMC antecedents in relation to HE brand identity (Foroudi et al., 2017), social media, direct marketing, advertising and websites were not found to strongly influence branding, although social media was found to influence event participation (Turner, 2017). Therefore, there is a need for new research on IMC in the context of the application of technology as an integral component of the 4-stage model of IMC. Schultz (1993) observes that the practices of customer relations' management are dynamic, and therefore they remain variable due to changes in organisations' use of advanced technology in different functions, which is linked to capability at the departmental level.

4.5.3.3 Marketing scope

Lee et al. (2015) assert that the major impact of the customer-oriented approach is experienced through its performance, the criteria for which are assessed through the costs–benefits of the marketing activities, which links back to marketing communications scope to assist in achieving the organisational objectives. Essentially, a customer-oriented structure generally gives greater importance to those departments that are associated with its benefits (Burton, 1999). After deciding to change its structure, the organisation experiences increased costs that are incurred based on the additional skills and resources required for the specified departments, such as marketing, research and development, and customer services, which require the strategic integration of the marketing department with the overall organisational structure (Hollensen, 2017).

Marketing capabilities are highlighted by Hamel and Prahalad (1990), whereby these can help to better understand innovative capability, which is linked to the financial and intellectual capacity of the marketing department. Furthermore, it is commonly reported that the capability of the marketing department is linked to a structural presence, which gives this department the power to gain the required finance for marketing purposes, also referred to as the 'scope of marketing' (Vorhies and Harker, 2000; Hooley et al., 2008; Eng and Spickett-Jones, 2009; Walle, 2017).

4.5.3.4 Scope of marketing communications in public and private organisational contexts

The scope of marketing communications relates to the importance of this area to achieving the overall marketing and organisational objectives. Some authors differentiate the scope of marketing based on the organisation being in the public or private domain. For example, Loeffler and Bovaird (2019) state that public organisations develop a well-known and strong identity over the passage of time, and therefore that marketing communications activities should be undertaken in the longitudinal organisational context as opposed to at any single point in time. Moreover, Porcu et al. (2017) highlight the need to comprehend marketing communications scope as being distinct for the public sector, because public sector marketing communications simply focus on communicating the necessary information to fulfil the stakeholders' communication needs.

According to Lo Presti and Marino (2020), public organisations are required to build their own unique competencies (i.e., those with which they can perform better than others) and to concentrate on these rather than on building their brand image through marketing communications. In their suggestions to public organisations for strategic marketing communications, Lo Presti and Marino (2020) simply advise focus on the essential and required information for the public, rather than spending public funds on brand-building activities. Kliatchko (2008) emphasises the adoption of a marketing mindset that leads the organisation's marketing communications scope through a customer-centred mindset that focuses on understanding the perceptions, needs and wants of customers, as opposed to an organisation-centred mindset. On the adoption of a customer-centred mindset, organisations position the consumer centrally in all their activities, which requires intensive marketing communications to build a brand image in the customer's view (Judson et al., 2008).

Pavlidou and Efstathiades (2021) investigated the extent that marketing is useful for public organisations to achieve their objectives through deriving significant advantages from the scope of the marketing communications. Traditional marketing communications approaches can be employed in different contexts to increase public interest or awareness, or to promote the mission of public organisations (Porcu et al., 2017), although the mission (service) of public organisations is established ahead of time and cannot be changed as per the marketing communications required to

communicate with the public. Foreman (2005) asserts that marketing communications cannot be completely ignored in public organisations, while acknowledging that the scope of marketing communications may be narrow compared to their private counterparts. Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) indicate that public organisations can implement a huge variety of marketing communications to create public awareness and fulfil the demand for available services. Meanwhile, private organisations are significantly more aggressive in offering their services competitively, and thus utilise marketing communications for brand-building, customer attraction and retention, as core elements of the marketing communications scope (Foreman, 2005; Dolnicar and Lazarevski, 2009).

4.5.3.5 Financial, tactical integration and scope of marketing

Existing literature on the scope of marketing communications in public and private organisational contexts claims that any department's scope is also related to its functional power, which depends on the significance of that department to the achievement of the organisational objectives/goals (Cornelissen and Harris, 2004; Bryce, 2007; Garland et al., 2016). Further, there has been much debate regarding the extent to which a department can influence the organisation's overall performance. For example, in terms of the attraction of resources, this means that departments tend to attract resources to achieve their objectives, which is also linked to the financial and tactical integration of marketing because of its importance in gaining resources and greater rewards based on improved integration with the organisation's financial system. For instance, the marketing department's budget is directly linked to its power, thereby attracting greater reward through increased power (Lee, 2010; Poțincu and Mureșan, 2015). It is therefore evident that the most powerful departments will certainly be able to gain the most powerful resources and rewards (Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974; Smith, 2012; Day, 2011).

4.5.3.6 Financial aspects of marketing communications

The literature related to the reward system explores its effectiveness based on the scope of departmental activities, among which Barney (2001) develops criteria for valuable resources that are inimitable and stimulate competitive benefits from departmental activities that lead to the strategic integration of a department within the

organisation. However, this might be insufficient for sustaining a competitive advantage, due to the need to be directly associated with the performance of the marketing department to better determine and satisfy the customers' requirements based on marketing strategies (Priem and Butler, 2001). In terms of the organisation's competitive edge, the philosophy of reward is identified as a crucial issue, whereby the organisation needs to assign rewards to the marketing department due to its important role in the achievement of the organisational objectives (Hollensen, 2017). Companies reward innovative staff, which is strategic from the organisation's perspective (Puranam et al., 2014). For the attainment of organisational objectives, the reward philosophy needs to be aligned with the business strategy, which is why the importance of the marketing department is much greater in the private as compared to the public sector. The budgets for public organisations are established by the government, and therefore may be limited due to the rules and regulations directly impacting compensation across departments (Hollensen, 2017). Furthermore, this discrepancy is directly associated with the structure of public organisations (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010). Therefore, an understanding of the reward system in public and private universities will be developed in this study in the context of the strategic and financial integration of marketing communications scope in relation to the resources, budget and rewards in each type of university.

4.5.3.7 Tactical coordination and marketing communications scope

The immediate focus of the first stage of the coordination and marketing communications scope is on the tactical implementation of IMC. Therefore, it is vital to identify the difference between tactics and strategy, which is that strategy is helpful in identifying the objectives that the organisation needs to accomplish, whereas tactics represent how those objectives can be achieved (Broderick and Pickton, 2005). There is a possibility that both public and private universities have the same type of activities, but the objectives of these specific IMC tactics would be slightly different, due to the nature of objectives related to IMC in public and private sector universities. Indeed, the IMC objective in the case of the public sector is to keep the public informed regarding the university so that trust is maintained, whereas the IMC objective of private universities is to induce buying behaviour in the public. Private sector universities are focused on attracting customers and achieving customer satisfaction

through IMC activities, and thus are more competitive in their nature. Therefore, there might be differences in the application of technology and financial investment in IMC strategies in the two types of university.

In the second stage when an organisation utilises an IMC approach, it is vital to coordinate the functions of different marketing communications (e.g., direct marketing, sales and PR), because in instances of coordination failure the customer may not be able to understand the message that the organisation is intending to project (Van Zee, 2009). However, there is no mention of customer-oriented approaches at this level. The expansion of the second stage represents a re-definition of communications, that is, all contact points that establish a connection between the organisation and customer must be considered. Behavioural data should also be collected to help understand the customer (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). However, public sector universities do not focus on generating data leads because they are not profit-seeking organisations. Instead, they place their emphasis on providing high-quality education to the public. Meanwhile, private sector universities utilise a customer-centric approach to gain, retain and ensure the satisfaction of their customers, which might affect the strategic and financial integration with IMC strategies in each type of university.

The third stage represents the utility of increased information flows regarding the attitudes, behaviour and transactional data of customers. Customer-related data are converted into customer-related knowledge. Accordingly, more information should be provided about the customers, such as how often they buy, what they tend to buy most often, and their purchasing patterns (Fernández-Cavia et al., 2017). This information flow must be maintained between major stakeholders and is helpful in designing the optimum message to project to customers (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001). However, there is a significant difference between private and public universities, in that the former communicate to induce buying behaviour, whereas public universities communicate to inform about the provision of education, although they may have richer data than private universities because the data held by public universities is linked with the government.

Finally, the fourth stage involves the strategic deployment of IMC. This includes the tactical departmental and financial integration of the organisation to finally become

customer oriented as a means of generating a behavioural and measurable return on investment. A successful IMC approach is one that considers the organisation's goals as opposed to simply the product/service goals (Gonring, 1994; Schultz, 1997; Schultz and Schultz, 2003). The overall finance related to public universities in the KSA is under the control of the Ministry of Education, with the financial budgets determined by the government and the Ministry. In comparison, private sector universities establish their own marketing budget to successfully compete in the market. Therefore, in this respect, it is easier for private universities to channel their funds compared to public universities. Therefore, the 4-stage IMC model will be helpful to explore the integration of IMC activities from the tactical to strategic levels, in order to understand the differences in the integration of marketing communications strategies with relation to the organisational culture. The subsequent section explores IMC in HEIs in general, and specifically in the KSA.

4.5.4 IMC in HEIs

The evolution of marketing in HE in the 1980s shared strong and interrelated characteristics to that of healthcare, in which the concepts of marketing and advertising were equated, leading to the belief that the quality of HE could be impacted (Hayes, 2007). Over time, marketing became an invaluable tool for success across many healthcare institutions (Hayes, 2007), and as per the non-profit nature of healthcare institutions, the trends in public HE could enjoy the same transformation validated in healthcare. Nevertheless, there are differences in the application and conceptualisation of marketing communications in business, which have led to considerable research into marketing communications in business settings (O'Leary-Kelly and Flores, 2002) compared to the under-researched domain of HE (Foroudi et al., 2017). The current need for HE to utilise IMC in attracting students has continued relevance in terms of the use of brand and employability figures for market attraction (Foroudi et al., 2017), which could be managed from managerial and theoretical frameworks and perspectives. While studies such as Foroudi et al.'s (2017) explored the measurement of the relationships between the key IMC constructs and brand identity in HE, other perspectives such as the cultural orientation of IMC practices in HEIs' communication and branding remain under-researched, especially among regions with distinct national cultures such as the KSA. In other work, scholarly

emphasis on the relevance of IMC to brand communication was proposed by Judson et al. (2008), while Capatina et al. (2020) emphasise the relevance of social media in increasing brand identity awareness and communication. Foroudi et al. (2017) consider the ability for HEIs to maximise the brand locally through digital technologies that provide broader penetration of the brand, university research and teaching excellence via social media communications. This further reiterates the notion that HEIs are becoming yet another organisation experiencing marketisation (Kalafatis and Ledden, 2013), which has been attributed to HEIs needing to confront globalisation, commercialisation and massification, among other phenomena (Hayes, 2007), which have continued to reshape the manner in which marketing communications are deployed and utilised in HE. While studies have indicated factors such as globalisation, ranking and decreased public funding as challenges to public universities' survival (Miotto et al., 2020), the public universities within the KSA are primarily affected by globalisation, as opposed to ranking and a reduction in public sector funding (Miotto et al., 2020). With globalisation significantly affecting public universities internationally, such as the call for changing the organisational culture to manage competitiveness and relevance in discharging university responsibilities that applies to both public and private universities. One common best practice within the globalised HE sector is how marketing communications through websites has been identified as key for public engagement (Lo Presti and Marino, 2020).

Reflecting on the KSA's HE, significant investment has continued to be seen in the public and private domains to improve and maintain excellence in the sector (Issa et al., 2021; Essa and Harvey, 2022), through which marketing communication could have a significant role in achieving the organisational objectives in both sectors. One distinct difference between the public and private sectors in the KSA is the former's alignment to national culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007) under the Ministry of Education, which controls and supervises policies and implementation within HE, with public universities expected to place greater emphasis on the national culture due to their government-linked funding source, while private universities can take advantage of experience and certain flexibilities to maintain their competitive advantage. The literature has highlighted certain elements where potential areas of difference could exist among universities maintaining a competitive advantage using marketing

communications. Across many studies exploring IMC factors, these have been classified into six groups (Foroudi et al., 2017):

(i) **Brand elements** are characterised by elements such as logo, colour and name. The context of a brand has been regarded as a vital tool, especially in communication, since it can be employed to project an organisational position (Judson et al., 2008). Brand elements are even more effective when employees are knowledgeable in aligning the brand with the organisation (Xiong and King, 2019). Universities have continued to utilise brands in projecting their image, and have subsequently improved recruitment (Foroudi et al., 2017), similar to the tourism industry (Judson et al., 2008).

Among the KSA's institutions, brand elements continue to play a significant role in shaping marketing communications through the display of institutional logos that are utilised to either convey heritage or attachment to a given location (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020).

(ii) **Service attributes** involve the quality of services delivered to students and other stakeholders (Foroudi et al., 2017). Understanding how students are supported to acquire their degrees while studying in HE is becoming an increasingly visible facet of student satisfaction surveys (Theobald et al., 2021). Although this may appear as common practice across both public and private institutions in the UK and US, the nature of public and private universities' operations in the KSA could mean significant differences due to the KSA's national culture, and hence there could be benefit in understanding the available mediums explored by public and private HEIs in the KSA as part of their IMC processes.

(iii) **Websites** involve seven factors: information displayed, usability, navigability, customisation, security, availability and download speed (Foroudi et al., 2017). Websites have become an important marketing tool for institutions (Cyr et al., 2010), and therefore have gained increased relevance in the IMC applications used (Foroudi et al., 2017). This study thus intends to explore how websites are employed by public and private universities in the KSA.

(iv) **Social media platforms** provide communication through WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and so forth (Kizgin et al., 2020). Social media has continued to gain broad recognition and integration with other IT tools such as artificial intelligence (Capatina et al., 2020), with HEIs continuing to deploy social media to communicate

key information across their student and alumni groups (Kizgin et al., 2020), with even greater integration as part of the learning process among students in the KSA (Issa et al., 2021). Considering the relevance of social media, this study intends to explore commonalities and differences in social media usage in IMC implementation between public and private universities.

(v) **Advertising** is considered a means of attracting customers through the display of specific products. It has also been an integral component of marketing communication and PR (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010). Over time, technology has reshaped advertising, particularly with the advent of digital communications such as social media (Foroudi et al., 2017). This study intends to explore how such media platforms have been adopted for IMC practices in the KSA's HEs.

(vi) **PR** refers to the department that deals with public communication in the KSA, which represents a vital department for this study as it manages IMC. Others groups that could help universities to maintain a competitive advantage using marketing communications include (vii) direct marketing and (viii) the country of origin (Foroudi et al., 2017).

Due to the significant role that technology plays in modern organisations in general, and in HEIs in particular, the next section considers recent digital communication dimensions in HE.

4.5.5 Recent dimensions of digital communications in HE

Within the context of educational settings, technology deployed through marketing communications has an extensive history of usage in both learning processes and managing learning, of which the KSA is no exception. Despite the extensive history of digital technologies within HE, one commonality is the transformation of the pedagogical baseline for the use of technology in learning processes, as well as marketing communications (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020). Although the adoption of digital technologies differs broadly among institutions located even in the same region, such as the Middle East (Habibi and Zabardast, 2020), there has been a continued effort to utilise advances in technology in relation to social change worldwide (Racat et al., 2021). Since the first digital technology concept was introduced in the KSA as far back as 1989 (Lazar et al., 2020), which saw the introduction of computers in educational

settings, significant progress has been made not only in teaching and learning, but also in the administration of HE (Habibi and Zabardast, 2020).

The recent spread of Covid-19 across the globe has disrupted physical communication, promoting the potential for digital marketing communications to highlight the use of technology in classroom lectures, seminars and other on-campus activities in HE, where again digital technologies such as social media have become more pronounced in marketing communications (Racat et al., 2021). However, as per other fields, digital media has provided a new dimension to communication, and indeed IMC. While different organisations have responded differently to the pandemic, what has remained common is the manner in which digital communication has become the new normal, through online teaching, meetings, webinars and even PhD *viva voce* sessions. Within the context of marketing communications, this can be seen as a paradigm shift in the operations of HEIs.

Despite the increasing penetration of technology in HE, varying cultural perspectives continue to emerge across the globe (Lichy and Merle, 2020), such as the Middle East where technology applications may be restricted based on cultural values, and particularly in terms of social media (Issa et al., 2021). Nevertheless, HE in the KSA has recently witnessed massive improvements in social media access, and HE as a place of knowledge-sharing could be a vital setting for understanding how such technologies could be utilised to improve learning as well as marketing. Social media, and more recently, the association of artificial intelligence (Capatina et al., 2020), has provided a new and relevant tool through which to integrate IMC practice into the context of HE, due to the increased competition between universities to attract students in the global education marketplace (Miani et al., 2021). Hence, understanding the implementation of IMC towards building a strong university brand could represent an area of significant interest from both managerial and theoretical perspectives, especially in the KSA.

The use of digital technologies has recently been identified as the key means of student recruitment across public HEIs in the KSA (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020). Although this represents a positive step in understanding and improving IMC for public HEIs in the KSA, private HEIs have the potential to compete with public institutions in this area. However, one key knowledge gap is how the operational and leadership culture has

shaped the implementation of digital marketing among such universities, which could provide a new perspective on IMC in the KSA.

The following section explores the influence of organisational culture and decision-making on IMC in the context of institutions based in both the public and private sectors.

4.6 Organisational culture and decision-making on IMC in public and private institutions

Organisations from both the public and private sectors continue to improve their performance, which is regarded as a vital aspect of business success (Yarborough et al., 2011). One of the key approaches the organisations utilise to achieve effective outcomes is through engaging with tangible and intangible resources (Porcu et al., 2020), although others perceive this as the ability to convert the organisational resources into business results (Luxton et al., 2015). Both sides agree that IMC represent a business capability necessary to achieve optimum organisational performance (Kliatchko, 2005; Porcu et al., 2020). However, the building and utilisation of the organisational resources, which researchers define as organisational culture (Porcu et al., 2020), remain under debate in terms of whether the decision to implement IMC lies within the management staff alone or other staff (Xiong and King, 2019). Moreover, it has been clearly established that organisational cultures suitable for IMC decision-making and implementation are built on collaboration, staff empowerment and teamwork (Porcu et al., 2020), which could lead to standardised procedures, rules and control mechanisms.

The growing relevance of organisational culture to IMC has led to significant changes to the manner in which IMC is viewed, from an originally straightforward approach to the coordination of marketing activities, to its evolution into a broader component of the organisational approach (Porcu et al., 2017). The challenge at present would appear to be similar for both private and public institutions, in that both sectors strive for improvement in organisational performance (Gronroos, 1990). The achievement of such performance is affected by the organisation's implementation of IMC decisions, in which researchers have emphasised the relevance of certain aspects of organisational culture, including customer relationships (Chari and David, 2012),

managerial ability (Helfat and Peteraf, 2015), and supply chain management (Barney, 1986).

Despite the significant body of scholarly literature on the importance of organisational culture for IMC (Porcu et al., 2012; Kliatchko and Schultz, 2014; Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017), which has been described as an influential antecedent for IMC (Eagle and Kitchen 2000; Zvobgo and Melewar 2011; Kliatchko and Schultz, 2014), others have reported scant evidence of the extent to which organisational culture affects IMC implementation (Porcu et al., 2020). Although a limited number of qualitative studies (Ots and Nyilasy, 2015; Mortimer and Laurie, 2017) have been conducted, it remains unclear how organisational culture influences the public and private sectors.

A study by Porcu et al. (2020) utilised a quantitative approach to comprehend the influence of organisational culture on firms' IMC implementation, where collaborative approaches are popularly known as clan cultures and controlling cultures are regarded as hierarchical. However, it is yet to be established whether such findings fit well within the academic sector of HE, in the Middle East, and particularly the KSA where national culture differs significantly from the majority of studies conducted in this subject area.

Porcu et al. (2017) highlight the role of organisational structure and culture in IMC implementation. Although organisational culture has been prioritised in terms of its influence on IMC (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Reid, 2003, 2005; Christensen et al., 2008), others have argued that control management, cultural and flexibility issues are the potential antecedents of IMC (Eagle and Kitchen, 2000). While the majority of these studies concentrate on the organisational cultures of institutions within the US, UK, Europe and Australia, limited evidence exists as to whether they are directly compatible with Middle Eastern organisational culture and IMC. Moreover, despite the extensive interest in the literature on the role of organisational culture in relation to IMC, there is a lack of empirical evidence establishing links between IMC and organisational culture (Porcu et al., 2017). This provides yet another avenue to further understand the role of organisational structure and culture in IMC implementation, and more specifically across the public and private sectors. The subsequent section draws this chapter to a close with a summary of this review of IMC strategies.

4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the concept of IMC among organisations from both the private and public domains, identifying the emergence of IMC over time, and how it has reshaped organisational development. IMC was also considered as a strategic business process that can be vital when employed for the development, planning, execution and evaluation of coordinated marketing communications programmes that are relevant to an internal and external audience.

After discussing the RABOSTIC, 4-pillar and 4-stage models, comparison of their corresponding elements was elaborated in this chapter, whereby neither the RABOSTIC nor the 4-stage model were considered suitable for this study due to their elements being more closely associated with IMC features rather than implementation. While the 4-pillar model has strategic elements of IMC implementation, such elements were not found to be compatible with the scope of this study, which intends to explore organisational culture and its relations to national culture in IMC implementation. The scope considers factors such as budget approvals and strategic communications, among others, which are more closely linked to the 4-stage model than the 4-pillar model.

The 4-stage IMC model was selected for this research due to its suitability for implementing IMC in line with the current stage of IMC practice in the KSA. This model will also be helpful in exploring the differences and similarities in the development and implementation of IMC with relation to organisational culture among public and private universities in the KSA, since the 4-stage model includes specific elements found to be relevant to the scope of this study.

The literature revealed that the scope of marketing communications is linked to organisational culture, and therefore examining the differences and similarities between public and private universities' organisational culture can help in understanding the difference in marketing communications scope between these types of universities. Therefore, exploring the affinity between private and public HEIs could provide new insight into the relevance of organisational culture in shaping IMC practices in a region with high power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity dominance. Having critically reviewed the literature on organisational culture and IMC in relation to both the global and the KSA contexts, the next chapter develops a

conceptual framework that links the different models of organisational and national culture with IMC implementation in the KSA.

Chapter 5

The Theoretical Framework

5.1 Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 considered the literature evidence in terms of the organisational culture (Chapter 3) and IMC (Chapter 4), and the inter-relationship between the two among organisations. This chapter intends to utilise the theoretical framework that provides lenses through which to review and examine IMC in private and public institutions in order to address the second research objective (to formulate a theoretical framework that interlinks the various models and elements from the literature with IMC strategies), through the synthesis of the evidence gathered to develop a theoretical model that will support insight into the impact of national culture on organisational culture in the KSA's HEIs, and its consequence in implementing IMC practices among private and public HEIs in the KSA. First, the research gap and the relevant theories are considered.

5.2 Research gap and relevant theories

The continued need to improve the business performance of organisations through product marketing has been driven by the organisational culture (Yarbrough et al., 2011), which in turn has been linked to the internal and external understanding of marketing in order to strategically focus on the integration of marketing events, as well as business functions (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017). While Luxton et al. (2015) highlight the role of IMC as a business capability that helps transform the organisation's resources into business/brand outcomes, Porcu et al. (2020) confirm that there is a paucity of evidence empirically linking corporate culture to organisations in terms of IMC.

In spite of the highlighted inter-relationship between culture and IMC, regional variation of culture due to national culture has received insufficient attention from researchers, partly due to the limited applications and implementation of IMC practices, particularly in the Middle East region (Turner, 2017), while such extension to the HEIs of the KSA is almost non-existent. Recent trends in the KSA, where private universities are

increasingly moving towards adopting global practices in marketing communications, and thus creating dilution from the conservative national culture of the KSA in organisational culture, are exhibiting a new dimension to HE in the region. This study thus intends to explore the research gap in terms of how national culture plays a role in diluting organisational culture among private and public HEIs in the KSA.

While it is becoming clear that organisational activities could provide insight into the success of such activities, the organisational culture and structure have been found to influence IMC implementation (Porcu et al., 2017). Despite these constructs, limited studies have reported the focus of brand identity in HE and such antecedents of IMC (Foroudi et al., 2017), which this study seeks to explore in terms of the difference at the private and public university levels.

The regional setting of universities has continued to have an influence on their brand awareness (Foroudi et al., 2017), although in the contemporary era universities compete on the global stage (Miani et al., 2021), whereby research into how such locations (e.g., the KSA) affect an institution's brand and IMC strategy could provide new insights, since the literature has previously concentrated on organisations rather than HEIs, despite the increasing competition among HEIs in attracting students (Foroudi et al., 2017).

National culture has been viewed by researchers as a vital means of building trust (Doney et al., 1998), which could signify that IMC implementation among HEIs could benefit immensely from considering the national culture perspective. Researchers have indicated clear variation between Eastern and Western national culture (Hofstede, 1984; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 2011), which has differed even at the individual level (Lok and Crawford, 2004). Hence, utilising the Hofstede model to understand how such national cultures influence IMC could help to fill the research gap of this study, particularly given that power distance and uncertainty avoidance are so prominent in the KSA (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). The next section commences the development of the theoretical framework for this study.

5.3 Development of the theoretical research framework

A theoretical framework establishes the connection between the different segments of the study, through an interlinked flowchart of different theories and targets, and

providing new insight into the study phenomenon, in this case the development and implementation of IMC. The theoretical framework developed in this chapter originates from the five models selected for this study. The cultural web model has been found to help comprehend the concept of organisational culture, where the artefacts of organisational structure; power structure; rituals, stories, and routines; and control systems can be explored. Conversely, the high- and low-cultural contexts developed by the work of Hall are exploited to further explore the characteristics of private and public HEIs within a country considered as a high-context culture (i.e., the KSA). Among the elements of the work of Hall, social orientation, communication, commitment and responsibility are prioritised in this study, considering their relevance in marketing communication. The Hofstede model, which explores national culture in terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and individualism versus collectivism will enable the assessment of how they dilute organisational culture. Furthermore, the Hofstede model has been linked to the competing values framework in order to assess how its national culture shapes the KSA's HEIs in terms of the clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market elements. The four models are then mapped onto the IMC through the 4-stage model, which explores financial, strategical integration, the application of IT, redefining marketing communications and the tactical coordination of marketing communications in relation to IMC development and implementation, as shown in Figure 5-1.

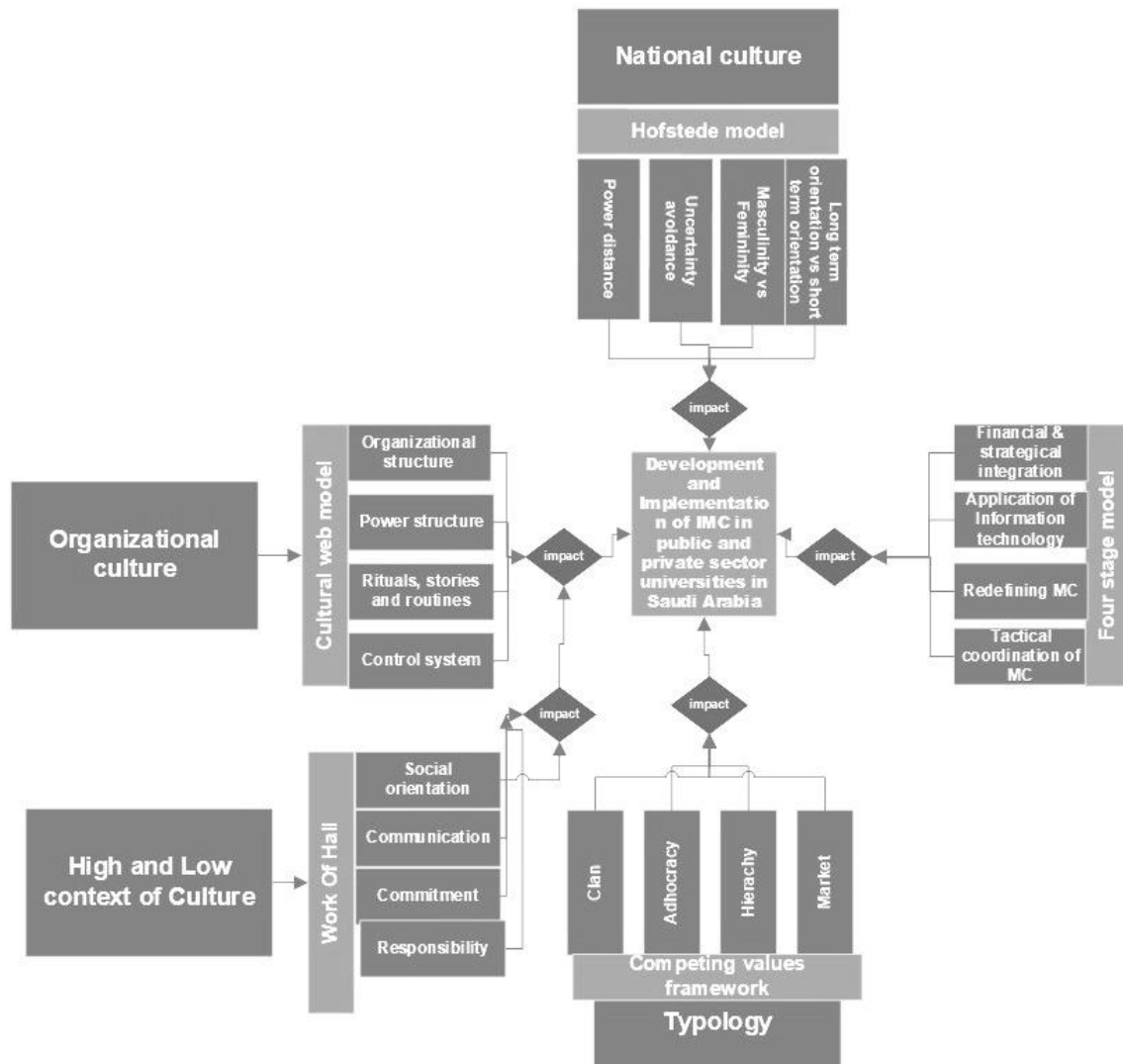


Figure 5-1: The theoretical framework

With the theoretical framework now established, the following section underscores its importance in research through defining the theories and models that underpin the study.

5.4 The importance of the theoretical framework

The importance of the theoretical framework can be highlighted through a discussion on the importance of theory in research. Heron (1996) asserts that theory is significant for social science research as it provides the rationale and background for the research being conducted. Additionally, Walliman (2010) states that the appropriate selection of theory enables the researcher to understand and highlight the major factors related to their study. Therefore, data collection should be based around these

factors, but not limited to the selected theories. Understanding these factors will further assist in exploring the in-depth data drawn from the participants in this study in order to develop relations between national and organisational cultural factors and IMC, showing how national and organisational culture impacts on IMC development and implementation in the selection of organisations.

The selection of appropriate theories as a theoretical framework in this study forms a foundation for the exploration of the target phenomenon that will further enable the researcher to explore in-depth information during the data collection. Moreover, the framework will prove helpful in developing specific and rich questions that enable this study to explore the impact of national culture on organisational culture in the KSA's HEIs, and its consequences in terms of the implementation of IMC practices among private and public HEIs in the KSA. Therefore, the selected theories will facilitate in understanding the research phenomenon through guiding the most pertinent aspects of the research. In summary, Crowther and Lancaster (2016) assert that a theoretical framework provides direction in finding or building understanding of the relationship between selected factors through the exploration of a social phenomenon, allowing further exploration of new social realities to develop a final theory/framework. The following section concludes this chapter with a summary of the development of the theoretical framework for this study.

5.5 Chapter summary

The development of a theoretical framework was the main aim of this chapter. Having identified five models/frameworks to be adopted from chapters 2–4, this led to the structural connection of the models' and frameworks' elements to achieve the research objectives. Having identified the research gap in terms of how the KSA's national culture dilutes organisational culture across private and public HEIs in terms of the implementation of IMC strategies, the five models were connected through the theoretical framework so that the various elements of the models can be explored with the target of understanding the links between them. The next chapter provides the methodological approach for this study.

Chapter 6

Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the methodological approach adopted by the study. The philosophical position is discussed in terms of the researcher's values, and the objectives of the research. The study is identified as exploratory research, and a justification is provided for selecting the qualitative method and an inductive research approach for the data collection and analysis. The selection of the sample, the sample size, and the data-collection methods are then discussed and justified. Next, the four case-study universities investigated in this research are introduced, followed by the research methods, as well as consideration of the trustworthiness, reliability and ethical considerations that this study adhered to during the research process.

6.2 The philosophical discussion

The philosophical debate among researchers involves elements related to epistemology as well as ontology. The nature of reality and its existence is the core subject of ontology, with epistemology explaining knowledge and assisting the researcher in comprehending it, while employing the optimum methods to investigate the world and its nature (Cohen et al., 2018). Hypotheses are utilised in accordance with epistemological as well as ontological methods (Cassell et al., 2017). However, due to the divide when defining the ontological and epistemological stance (Haynes, 2007; Creswell and Poth, 2018), there is a need to define these concepts, alongside the methodology and the methods and techniques, as shown in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1: Definitions of the major methodological terms (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021)

Ontology	Philosophical assumptions about reality
Epistemology	Assumptions regarding the nature and the acceptability of knowledge in a specific field
Methodology	Combination of techniques and tools required to conduct research in specific circumstances
Methods and techniques	Individual techniques and tools required to conduct data collection, analysis and presentation

There are different perspectives regarding where the philosophical debate begins, but according to Easterby-Smith et al. (2021, p.47), the ontology of research represents the appropriate starting point, whereby “the first term, ontology, is the starting point for most of the debates among philosophers”. Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) describe the hierarchy between the research output, and the ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods that underpin any research study through their four rings model, as shown in Figure 6.1.

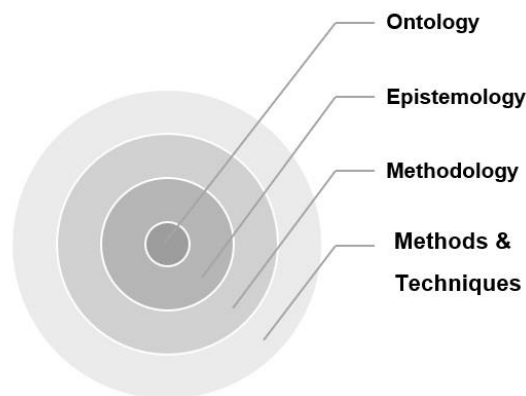


Figure 6-1: The four rings model (adapted from Easterby-Smith et al., 2021)

This section now conducts an in-depth discussion of the nature of ontology, epistemology and axiology in general, and in the context of this study.

6.2.1 Ontology

Ontology concerns knowledge and its nature, along with the considerations of reality, which include the debate on the nature and existence of reality, as well as the number

of realities (Cohen et al., 2000). In the social sciences, debate in this domain primarily concerns the positions of relativism and nominalism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In the social sciences, the researcher is interested in people's behaviour as opposed to that of inanimate objects. This leads to debate concerning the methods and assumptions of the natural sciences and their use in the social sciences, with the latter more centred around relativism (Raven et al., 2020) and nominalism (Neuman, 2014). For the current research, a relativist ontological position is adopted, with the justification for this philosophical position depending on the individual researcher's preferences and the topic of inquiry (Cassell et al., 2017). Therefore, in both instances it can be challenging to agree on the meaning of such concepts and how they can be evaluated (Raven et al., 2020). From a relativist ontological stance, it is believed, for example, that racial discrimination and social class are experienced and defined differently by different people, with this largely depending on the races and classes to which they belong (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, as this reality largely depends on race and class, it can be universally discovered as a reality that is based on perspective. The assumption underlying the relativist position is that there are different viewpoints for different observers. The major reason for adopting a relativist ontological position for this research is the need to explore the different national and organisational cultural factors in the context of public and private universities, and therefore the same cultural realities have different impacts on IMC strategies. Erhardt et al. (2016) place importance on workplace rituals as they relate to the business retention, identity, selection and day-to-day management of employees to further strengthen said culture. Therefore, the day-to-day management of each type of university could have a different impact on the IMC strategic decision-making. Moreover, it is asserted that "the efficacy of an activity corresponds to its alignment with the features of full rituals. Ritual-like activities are therefore less powerful and more frequent organisational events than full rituals" (Smith and Stewart, 2011, p.113).

It is important to understand the organisational values, rituals, beliefs and routines in order to help comprehend the local organisational culture (Smith and Stewart, 2011; Erhardt et al., 2016). The Hofstede model and the work of Hall have been selected in this study to comprehend the national culture, while the cultural web model and the competing values framework have been chosen to understand the organisational culture (McDonald and Foster, 2013), and the 4-stage model as an IMC theory. With

the major focus of this research to comprehend how national and organisational cultural realities influence the development and the implementation of the IMC strategies of HEIs in the KSA, there is a need to explore the impact of the national and organisational culture factors on the development and implementation of IMC in public and private universities. The Hofstede model assists in comprehending the national culture according to the power distance index, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity versus femininity, and how these dimensions could impact the organisational culture. Meanwhile, the work of Hall has the potential to provide insight into high- and low-context cultures that is pertinent due to the high power distance in the KSA (Kittler et al., 2011; Oliver, 2016), with the elements to be considered in this study including social orientation, commitment, responsibility, communication and confrontation. Then, the cultural web model helps to facilitate in understanding the role of organisational power, structure and control in IMC, which may differ in the KSA's public and private universities. Furthermore, the competing values framework consisting of clan, adhocracy, hierarchy and market will assist in identifying the differences between public and private universities in Saudi Arabia on the basis of these models and theories, although national and organisational cultural and its realities can be explored, since these realities can affect IMC strategies differently in different universities. Therefore, a relativist ontological position has been adopted for this research because the relativist stance claims that multiple realities may exist (Bawa, 2017; Yin, 2018). Therefore, from a relativist ontological perspective, IMC strategic reality cannot be regarded as unified for all universities, and this approach provides an opportunity to investigate how difference in the national and organisational culture affects IMC strategic decisions. This is because relativists believe that different observers have differing viewpoints, with what is regarded as truth varying depending on the particular perspective (Westacott, 2006). Therefore, a relativist ontological position would also assist the researcher in comprehending the truth of the national and organisational cultural impact on the IMC strategies of different universities. With the nature of ontology now established, the subsequent section explores the debate on reality in terms of subjectivism versus objectivism.

6.2.1.1 The debate on reality: subjectivism and objectivism

There is another debate within ontology in the context of subjectivism and objectivism, with Cohen et al. (2018) believing that subjectivism and objectivism should also be part of any ontological position, since ontology is a justification of the nature of reality, and thus highlights questions concerning researchers' assumptions regarding the manner in which this (social) world is operating in a context of subjective or objective reality. Lust and Blume (2016) report that objectivism proposes a singular nature for reality, with this type of ontology considered within the ontological discussion for the present chapter. This aspect of knowledge highlights its primary characteristic from an objectivist perspective, in which knowledge is considered to be an entity possessed by people, while existing independently of them in a codified manner. Such knowledge can be found in various forms, such as diagrams, documents and computer systems, and is also found in physical artefacts such as tools or machinery (Soliman, 2015). Objectivism highlights the position that there is an independent and external existence of reality that is separate from social actors (Kim et al., 2003; Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). Another aspect of ontology is subjectivism, which holds that social phenomena arise from the perceptions of social actors, whose actions are based on their perceptions about specific social phenomenon (Cassell et al., 2017). Despite the previous section establishing a general and broad definition of knowledge, it provides little insight into the precise nature and properties of knowledge (May, 2011). As the major aim of this research is the exploration of the impact of national and organisational culture elements on IMC strategies, the IMC strategic realities cannot be separated from the organisation's values, norms and rituals, which are practically embedded. Consequently, objectivism's ontological position is rejected, because the knowledge on this topic cannot be separated from the professionals involved in strategic IMC decision-making in the selected universities.

From the objectivist point of view, knowledge can be stored in different forms and can be completely transferred from one person to another, because objectivists believe that knowledge exists in an explicit form (Bultrini et al., 2015). However, national and organisational cultural realities do not exist independently in terms of IMC decisions; if those existed independently, then there should not be any difference in the national and organisational cultural impact on IMC strategic decision-making in public and private universities in the KSA. While both types of universities are in the same

country, for example, the budget and control of a public organisation is influenced by the political structure of the nation, because the public sector organisation's budget is decided by the government (Minculete and Chisega-Negrilă, 2014).

Therefore, with Khemani (2019) asserting that the culture of a bureaucracy is fundamentally shaped by the national politics, and Chugunov et al. (2019) highlighting the need to prioritise the allocation of public resources that leads to the maximum socio-economic impact, it is crucial that public sector organisations neither overspend, nor underspend (Da Cruz and Marques, 2011; Georgescu and Nistorescu, 2011). This implies that public and private universities differ in terms of their budget and control, and therefore that objectivism would not be helpful to understand the difference in national organisational culture's impact on budgetary IMC development and implementation in public and private universities in the KSA, because objectivism's assumption concerning the nature of knowledge is that it is perceived as objective. The assumption in this regard is that it is possible to develop a type of knowledge that is independent of subjectivity through a detached observer who seeks to establish truths via the characteristics of the applied method and the prior knowledge that exists in the field (Cassell et al., 2017). Collison and Parcell (2004) refer to this as a 'knowledge is truth' perspective, whereby explicit knowledge is considered as a body of scientific laws and facts that are similar across time and culture. Therefore, this approach does not appear suitable for obtaining knowledge on the national and organisational cultural impact on the IMC strategies of the public and private universities, and there is a need to gain knowledge from the people who are part of this phenomenon. It is not possible to separate knowledge from people and IMC practice, which is in opposition to the objectivist perspective, as objectivism asserts that knowledge is a separate entity.

The relativist ontology asserts that different people have differing perceptions and experiences in relation to their race and social class, which aligns with subjectivism. Therefore, this research seeks the social actors' perspectives to comprehend the national and organisational culture's impact on the IMC strategies of selected KSA universities. The subjectivist view believes that social phenomena arise from human perceptions, and from the consequential actions that they carry out in everyday life, which is why a subjectivist ontological position is adopted for this research that seeks to explore how national and organisational cultural realities impact on IMC decisions,

affecting IMC activities that include financial and strategic integration, the application of technology, defining the scope and the tactical coordination of IMC. Subjectivism is considered a continuous process that is under constant revision as a result of the social interaction of professionals, which links back to the organisational culture factors including the control, power, organisational structure, rituals, routines and stories of each organisation. Therefore, it is vital to study the details of an organisation's social situation to acquire an improved understanding of the IMC strategic reality with relation to the national and organisational culture. This perspective is usually associated with the terms 'social constructionism' or 'constructionism', as will be discussed in the next section on epistemology.

6.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology represents the study of the nature of knowledge and the manner of inquiring into the social and physical worlds. It represents the study of theories of knowledge that address how we know what we know (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2014). Epistemology has provided a foundation for sustained debate among social scientists, with a focus on two contrasting views of the social world: the positivist approach and the social constructionist approach (Chouikha, 2016). It is worthy of mention that epistemology as a term is derived from '*epistame*', the pre-historic mythology of the Greeks that indicated the intention to carry out an inquiry; to take something as a stimulus after experiencing it; drawing the known and knower closer to create a relationship (Walliman, 2010).

Therefore, an epistemological view is a philosophical stance. In the interpretivist view of the nature of knowledge, which is commonly accepted, knowledge is socially and culturally embedded (Crane, 2015). The positivist stance on the nature of knowledge is that knowledge is objective and tangible in nature (Saunders et al., 2019), while social constructionism states that knowledge is subjective reality because it is embedded in practice and language, as well as social and cultural values. In business management, the epistemological debate is around positivism and social constructionism (Crane, 2015), with the major differences between these epistemological stances presented in Table 6-2, as well as the justification for the selection of social constructionism in this research.

Table 6-2: The characteristics of positivism and social constructionism, and the justification for the selection of social constructionism in this study

Characteristics	Positivism	Social constructionism	Justification for the use of social constructionism	Author
The observer	Must be independent throughout the research process.	Is part of what is being observed.	<p>The researcher is part of the research process, with the research framework developed on the basis of the researcher's own interpretation of the role of different national and organisational cultural factors impacting on IMC strategies in the public and private universities in the KSA.</p> <p>Additionally, the researcher is part of the data-collection process through collecting in-depth data from the study participants, and thus seeks to explore the meaning attached to their experience, professional role, culture, and values in strategic decision-making for IMC. Furthermore, analysis for the research is based on the researcher's own understanding of the data, because the social constructionist researcher is the major driver of the science.</p>	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Explanations	Positivism demonstrates causality between variables.	The major aim of social constructionism is to increase the general understanding of the phenomenon.	<p>The aim of this research is to explore the national culture impact on organisational culture and its consequences for implementing IMC strategies, rather than testing for causality between them. Therefore, this research represents an effort to increase the overall understanding about the topic, rather than to test whether national and organisational culture impacts on IMC strategies.</p>	Quinlan et al. (2015)

Research progresses through	Experiments, surveys and statistics	Exploring the processes that people use to create experiences	Rich data are collected from a small number of participants involved in IMC strategic decisions and activities.	Neuman (2014)
Units of analysis	Should be reduced to the simplest terms.	Whole situation complexity might be included.	This research focuses on two contexts: (i) to explore the overall national and organisational culture's impact on IMC strategies, and (ii) how national and organisational culture affects IMC strategies differently in each type of organisation.	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Generalisation through	Statistical probability to test the causal relation between variables, to produce results such as true or false.	Theoretical abstraction	Through the social constructionist epistemological position, the researcher attempts to explore the topic from the viewpoint of the everyday interactions with the phenomenon, which leads to theoretical abstraction rather than statistical probability.	Walliman (2018)
Sampling requires	Large samples, randomly chosen	Small numbers of cases chosen for certain purposes	A small sample of IMC practitioners will be used to explore the context from their point of view.	Cohen et al. (2000)

The discussion will now move on to consider the positivist philosophical stance in relation to this research.

6.2.2.1 Positivism

The central idea of positivism is that there is external existence of the world, namely, there is an external cause of occurrences, and therefore the properties of such causes can be measured objectively, instead of through subjective means (Cohen et al., 2018). The positivist stance is against social constructionism because of the observer position, human interest, nature of inquiry, research process and unit of analysis (see Figure 6-2). Indeed, Bultrini et al. (2015) indicate that the notion of objective realities is deeply rooted in the positivist epistemology, and that in terms of positivism a social phenomenon can be measured and quantified to develop laws and general principles

(Ackerman et al., 2013). This means that objectivism as an ontological position is directly aligned with positivist epistemology, because objectivists also believe that knowledge is a single entity that exists separately and explicitly from human beings. As discussed above, national and organisational cultural realities do not exist independently and do not have a fixed impact on IMC strategies across all types of university, and so the positivist position is rejected for this research. Additionally, if considering the cause as national and organisational culture and the effect as IMC strategies being established in an organisation or workplace, it would be challenging to bring forward a single reality to establish the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC, because the impact is not static in nature. In other words, national and organisational culture affect IMC strategies differently in different contexts, and so through testing and observation, general principles and laws could not be established in the case of the national and organisational culture's impact on the IMC strategies of public and private universities in the KSA.

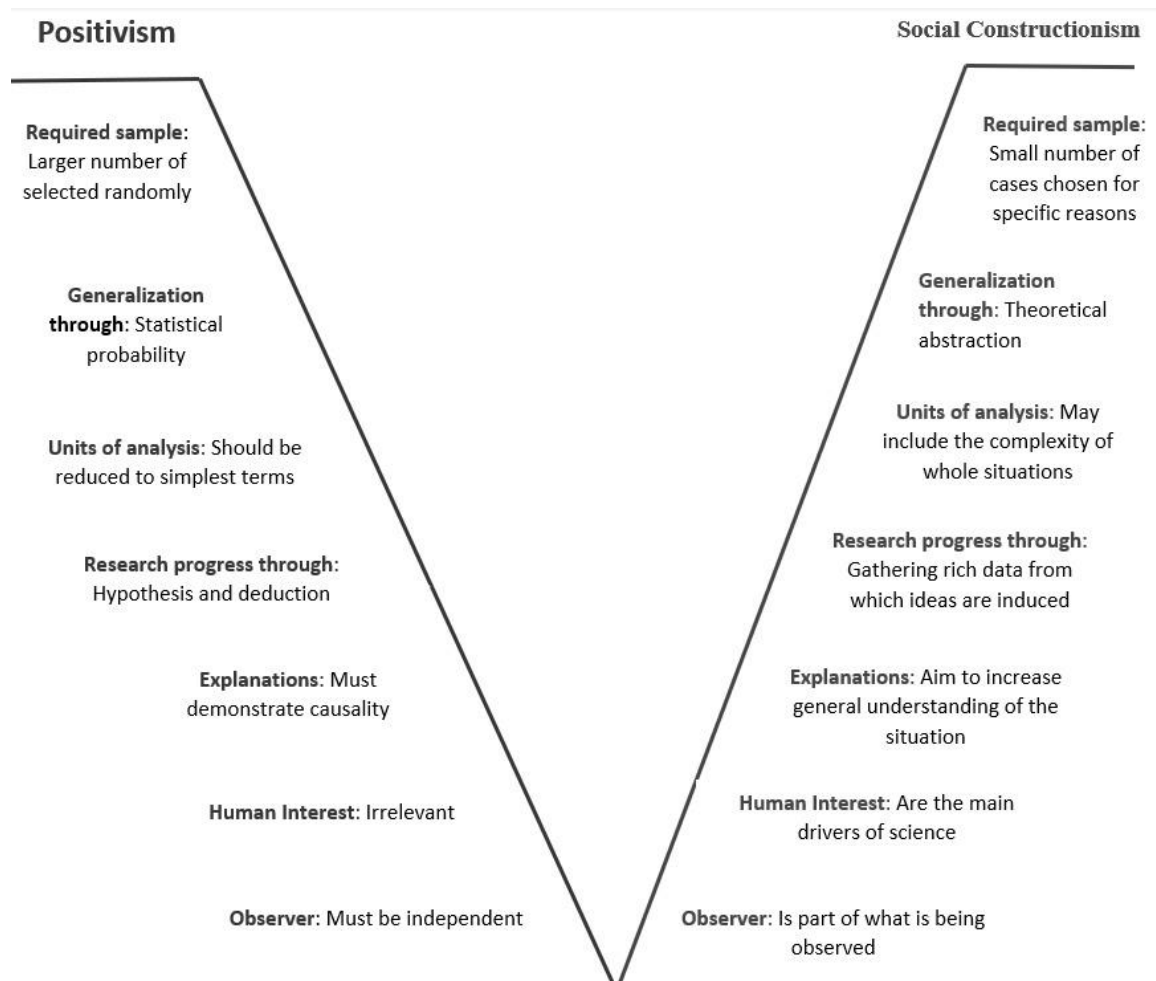


Figure 6-2: Positivism versus social constructionism (Naeem and Khan, 2019)

According to the positivist standpoint, there is an assumption that the investigated phenomenon is independent from the researcher, with knowledge generated through hypotheses that are either proved or rejected in order to supplement the existing knowledge in the field (Cassell et al., 2017). However, this research is not testing the causal relationship between organisational culture and the IMC strategies of universities. Indeed, this research is seeking to answer the question, “*How do elements of national and organisational culture affect private and public institutions and influence the development and implementation of IMC strategies in the KSA’s HEI context?*”. Therefore, there is a need to explore the multi-aspects of different national and organisational culture factors on different IMC strategies in different contexts, and thus a positivist epistemological position is not adopted for this research. Moreover, Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that knowledge is acquired through people’s subjective experiences, and thus in terms of research where the participants live and work are important contexts from which to comprehend their experiences. Therefore, it is more subjective in nature because it is practically, socially and culturally embedded. The researcher seeks to gather professional knowledge from those serving the target organisations in terms of IMC practices, which is more aligned with subjectivism than objectivism. From this approach, the production or development of knowledge arises from the intellectual reflection process of an individual or group of individuals working in IMC practice in both types of university in the KSA, rather than gaining explicit knowledge to explore the topic at hand. The intellectual capital of one professional is different from another, and therefore they develop different knowledge while fulfilling the same role based on their particular capabilities, and consequently they will have different opinions about the same task or context. Thus, this knowledge is more subjective than objective, which underscores why positivism is rejected for this research. The following section presents a discussion on social constructivism.

6.2.2.2 Social constructivism

The question then arises of what constitutes the essence of the social constructionist approach. Firstly, it is the notion that social reality is not necessarily objective, and instead can be defined through an individual’s subjective approach, that is, through gaining insight by learning from social interactions (Neuman, 2014). This would help in comprehending national and organisational cultural factors and their impact on IMC

strategies. The focus in this regard is on the manner in which people define the world, and particularly by sharing their experiences through language. However, language does not have fixed meanings, because the same words have different meanings in different contexts of life (Baumard, 1999). Consequently, social constructionism as an epistemological position is adopted for this research to gain knowledge on the selected national and organisational culture's impact on IMC, with the participants sharing their experiences through the medium of language. Hence, the social scientist should not necessarily seek objective facts to measure them, but rather should seek to ascertain people's behaviour in terms of how they behave, and why they behave in this manner in a certain situation "by adopting the role of an observer of social reality" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.10). Meanwhile, the focus of the researcher is to ascertain what people individually and collectively think and feel about the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC strategies, which is more closely aligned with social constructionism. The researcher is therefore paying greater attention to how people communicate in the organisational context, to understand the meaning of their verbally or non-verbally expressed interactions in order to help comprehend how the national and organisational culture impacts on the IMC strategies in the two types of university. Therefore, as a social researcher pursuing the social constructionist epistemological position, it is necessary to attempt to appreciate and understand the different experiences that professionals encounter, as opposed to searching for external causes of the IMC events. The reason for this is that human actions take place from sense-making, which in this study involves the individuals and the specific situation in which they find themselves as marketing professionals needing to fulfil their professional responsibilities.

Social constructionism adopts interpretivism through the contention that knowledge does not merely emerge from an existing phenomenon (Slater, 2017). The question arises of what forms the essence of social constructionism, and whether it is the idea that people determine the social reality, instead of objective factors (Rugg and Petre, 2007). Therefore, the researcher's task is not to identify facts in order to conduct measurement, but rather the focus should be on appreciating the different constructions of the organisational situation, to comprehend the actors' strategic IMC experience. Therefore, as social constructionist research focuses on what professionals individually and collectively believe or think about their IMC practice in

the organisation, the researcher seeks to understand the different experiences that professionals have when they practise IMC in their organisations. The reason behind this is that human actions take place from the sense that they make of the situations in which they find themselves, rather than their explicit knowledge of the national and organisational cultural impacts on IMC strategies.

Social constructionists believe that reality is constructed by social actors through their actions, and following their perceptions (Cassell et al., 2017). For example, different IMC professionals may have different opinions about the same factor of national and organisational culture, and its impact on IMC. Therefore, different professionals may have different perceptions about the same phenomenon within IMC, and their actions will follow their perceptions of that phenomenon. Such interpretations are likely to influence the nature and actions of their social interactions with one another, based on the everyday IMC practices and activities in the organisation, which is directly aligned with the social constructionist epistemological position.

Having discussed ontology and epistemology, the subsequent section considers axiology and the role that values play in the choices made during the research process.

6.2.3 Axiology

6.2.3.1 What is the role played by values in choices during research?

This section seeks to establish the role played by values in choices during research. Axiology is the branch of philosophy that studies judgments about value. Although this includes values that the researcher possesses in terms of ethics and aesthetics, it is the process of social inquiry that is of prime importance here, such as the researcher's choice of one topic of investigation over another (Saunders et al., 2019). Axiology is concerned with the role of values in the research (Creswell and Poth, 2018), since these will influence the research process. Neuman (2014) reminds us that the research community is not isolated from the wider world, and thus is affected by economic, political and social factors, with the norms that guide the community based on values, principles and informal norms. According to Chilisa (2012), axiology involves analysing values in order to more clearly comprehend their characteristics, meanings, origins, purpose, degree of acceptance and their impact on the experiences of others on a daily basis. Therefore, the researcher of this study is explicitly reflecting

on her personal attachment to this research. Since she is currently working at a public sector university in the KSA, it was easy to gain access to both public and private universities in the country for data-collection purposes. Consequently, this research is supported by the personal observations of the researcher, specifically regarding the development and implementation of IMC in both types of university. This study thus intends to explore the real practices at these universities through the professionals' perspectives, and it was of particular interest to explore the social actors' perspectives, who are part of IMC decision-making activities and practices in universities, rather than to comprehend the world as an external object or entity. Hence, the researcher's own values attached to the research directed her towards the specific research objectives of exploring, revealing and developmental in nature, rather than testing, generalising and measuring the cause and effect of variables. As the researcher of this study sought to explore the perspectives of those practitioners who are involved in IMC practice, this also provided her with an opportunity to conduct research as an insider. Additionally, the researcher's own values directed her towards specific philosophical stances, a subjectivist ontological position and a social constructionist epistemological position that allowed her to explore the subject of IMC realities through the practitioners' perspectives, since social constructivists and subjectivists believe that knowledge cannot be separate from the person, and that it is socially and culturally embedded. The next section describes the nature of the exploratory research design.

6.3 Exploratory research design

The major focus of this research is not providing a conclusion to the investigation, but rather to explore the context of public and private universities to understand the role of national and organisational culture in the development and implementation of IMC strategies. Consequently, as this research seeks to highlight how national and organisational culture impact on the IMC strategies in public and private universities in the KSA, an exploratory research design will facilitate in shining a light on this phenomenon of interest to discover more about it through asking open-ended questions, rather than seeking conclusive findings and generalising solutions to underlying problems (Saunders et al., 2019). As the major aim of this research is exploring the role of national and organisational culture elements in developing and implementing IMC in public and private universities in the KSA, there are two contexts

for exploration: (i) the national and organisational cultural impacts on IMC, and on the development and implementation of strategies; and (ii) the difference in public and private organisations' impact on the development and implementation of IMC strategies. Therefore, conducting exploratory research is most appropriate in this case, because the studied problem has not yet been clearly described in the context of public and private universities in the KSA. Moreover, this will allow researchers to change their direction in accordance with new insights and new data from the practitioners' perspectives, rather than retaining a specific structure for the research. Exploratory studies widely use interviews as a data-collection technique (Cohen et al., 2000), which could also help in collecting rich data from the IMC practitioners.

The research design represents an overall plan to enable data to be collected and analysed, whereby a typical research design describes the study purpose, the question types being explored, the data-collection and sample-selection techniques, and how the data will be analysed (Gray, 2014). Therefore, selecting an exploratory form of research design enabled the researcher to acquire background information on the national and organisational culture, as well as describing the terms of the study problem and the difference in context of the IMC strategies. Moreover, exploratory research is widely used to develop research priorities, and to clarify hypotheses and research problems. The term 'hypothesis' refers to a statement that is developed on the basis of limited evidence and subjected to rigorous testing for acceptance or rejection, and which provides a basis for further investigation (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, it is clear that this research will not test any hypothesis. Indeed, this study will develop a research framework to create links between different national and organisational cultural factors with relation to IMC factors. Based on this, the research approach is justified in the following section.

6.4 Research approach

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the data-driven inductive research approach is employed when the researcher seeks to investigate a phenomenon and develop a theoretical explanation, while the theory-driven deductive research approach develops a theoretical stance that is tested through the collected data. Attaching each research approach to different kinds of research philosophies is useful (Donley and Grauerholz,

2012). Therefore, Table 6-3 attempts to rationalise the philosophical alignment with the research approach for this study.

Table 6-3: Rationale for the inductive research approach

Characteristics	Deductive approach	Inductive approach	Justification for the inductive research approach	Author
Starting point	Deducing certain hypotheses (or a hypothesis) from theory (a hypothesis is a proposition about the relation between more than one variable or concept, which is subjected to rigorous testing).	Inductive research travels from observation towards hypothesis or theory development.	This study started from the researcher's own observations and interest in exploring the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. Therefore, an inductive research approach is employed in this study.	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Process	Expressing the developed hypotheses in operational form (which indicates how to measure the variables or concepts). Testing these operational hypotheses.	The inductive research approach develops links between variables, rather than testing the relations between them. The inductive research approach creates links between variables.	This research seeks to create links between different national culture factors such as power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and femininity, high and low context; and organisational culture factors such as organisational structure, power structure, ritual, routines, control systems, hierarchical and market culture in relation to different IMC factors such as tactical coordination, refining the scope of IMC, the application of technology, finance and integration. Therefore, an inductive research approach is employed to create links between these variables, rather than to test the relation between them.	Quinlan et al. (2015)
Findings of the research	Investigating the findings of the research (to confirm whether a theory is accepted or requires further modification).	Conclude based on the overall research to improve the general understanding of the topic.	The research contributes to the body of knowledge and provides a conclusion on the influence of national and organisational culture on the IMC strategies of public and private universities. Therefore, an inductive research approach is employed in this research.	Saunders et al. (2019)
Theoretical focus	Modification of theory in accordance with the findings of the inquiry, if necessary.	Develop a new theory/model or framework concluding the overall results of the research.	This research develops a research framework that creates a relation between the different national and organisational cultural and IMC elements. The outcomes of this research are also based on the social constructionism and subjectivism ontological positions, to explore the	Chapman and McNeil (2005)

			social, cultural and practical meanings attached to this topic, so the relation is created with subjective meanings from the data and an inductive research approach is employed to create links between these national and organisational cultures, and the strategic IMC factors.	
Required structure	Highly structured fixed	Flexible research structure	As this research seeks to explore the practitioners' perspectives on the topic and through consideration of social construction as an epistemological position, a small number of participants were selected for an in-depth inquiry. Therefore, a flexible structure was adopted for the qualitative data at hand.	Walliman (2018)
Required sample size	Large sample size required to generalise the results.	Small sample size to collect in-depth data from the participants.	A small sample was used for data collection to conduct an in-depth inquiry, in an inductive research approach that also aligns with social constructivism. This position also requires a small number of participants to comprehend the human interests in the topic.	Cohen et al. (2000)

Deduction is generally related to scientific research to test a hypothesis or theory, whereby the researcher seeks to generalise the results through the testing of existing theory or hypotheses. Deduction is widely used in the field of natural sciences to generalise a phenomenon through general laws and theory in a specific situation (Chapman and McNeil, 2005). As discussed above, this study was born from the researcher's own observation of the need to explore the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. Therefore, an inductive research approach is employed in this research. Consequently, this research is not required to test any hypothesis or theory.

The first reason for the selection of an inductive research approach is that as indicated, induction is more closely aligned with social constructionism and subjectivism, whereas deduction is more closely aligned with positivism and objectivism. The inductive approach is primarily concerned with the contexts in which phenomena are taking place, which is supported by subjectivism/social constructionism. Therefore, a small sample size is required for social constructivism and the inductive research approach. Contrary to the inductive approach, a large sample size is required for studies using a deductive approach.

In the inductive tradition, researchers collect qualitative data through a variety of qualitative data-collection techniques and establish the perspectives of the given phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2021). In this regard, Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) point out three reasons to select an inductive research approach with an exploratory research design and subjectivist ontological position. Firstly, it enables the researcher to make highly informed decisions about their research design, which involve the data-collection techniques and data analysis methods to be used (Gray, 2014). The research design represents the complete design of the research work, as it involves questions of from where and in which form the evidence should be collected, as well as how to interpret such evidence so that reasonable answers to the initial research questions can be generated. Secondly, it helps in deciding which research strategies should be selected, and which should not (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The inductive approach is more appropriate for this study as the researcher is interested in developing a theoretical framework with the purpose of understanding the reasons behind the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC strategies in public and private universities in the KSA, while it is also associated with the subjectivist and social constructionist philosophical position of this research. Thirdly, as Easterby-Smith et al. (2021) point out, having better comprehension of the different forms of research traditions will enable the researcher to adopt the optimum research design, while catering for constraints that may arise from having limited or no access to the required data, or having insufficient prior knowledge about the subject. These constraints would not help to facilitate the researcher in developing hypotheses, due to a lack of understanding of the research topic (Flick, 2014). Therefore, the researcher has tried to construct a relation between the philosophical stance of this research, the research design and the research approach (see Figure 6-3) that will lead to the development of a research framework through the collection of rich data from the given sample size.

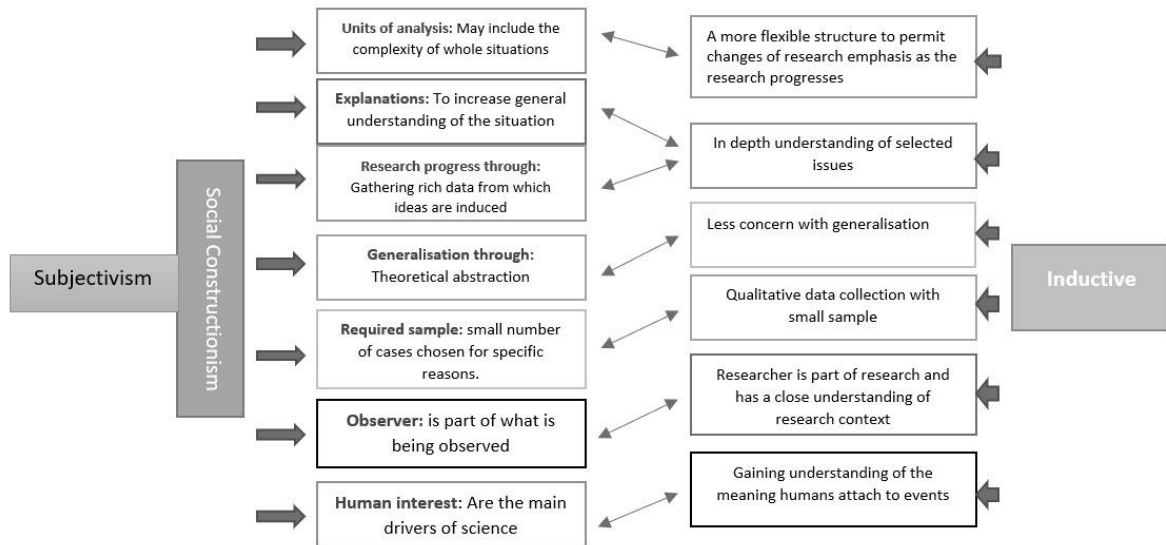


Figure 6-3: Subjectivism, social constructionism and their relation to the inductive research approach

In the subsequent section, the research strategy is discussed in general, and specifically in the case of this study.

6.5 Research strategy

According to Robson (2016, p.150), case study is “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence”. Yin (2003) adds that boundaries between the underlying phenomenon and its context (i.e., the setting in which the phenomenon is being investigated) are not clear in the case study. Unlike case study, an experimental strategy involves conducting research in a strictly controlled context. Case study also differs from the survey strategy in that the ability to comprehend and explore the context in which the research is carried out is limited in the survey strategy, due to the number of variables about which data need to be collected (Bassey, 1999). It is difficult to describe case study due to a lack of clear explanation (Gillham, 2000). However, the approach usually involves intensively studying a person, unit or group of individuals in order to generalise over multiple units, persons or groups of individuals. Case study focuses on a specific unit (Simons, 2009). Another definition of case study strategy is that it is a comprehensive analysis of a system in which the system is viewed through one or more methods (Gillham, 2000).

Rather than aiming at analysing cases, case study defines the cases and investigates the setting to better understand it (Gillham, 2000). Moreover, case study strategy “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p.96). Therefore, a case study of public and private universities is applied for this research.

Usually, case studies have advantages, through studying not only individual units, but also the cases of large groups of units (Shdaimah et al., 2011). Case study aims to draw either confirmable or illustrative conclusions. As these issues are inherent within the organisation, the design of the case study can be confusing (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). While conducting a qualitative case study, researchers need tools to comprehensively explore the participants’ views in their contexts. The appropriate implementation of a qualitative case-study method would be highly advantageous in this research, particularly to evaluate programmes and develop theories of national and organisational culture, as well as IMC theories.

Case study is a strategy of particular interest if the researcher aims to gain a better understanding of the study context, as well as the procedures being presented (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). This strategy also has significant ability to answer ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’ questions. Therefore, a case study research strategy is employed in this research to uncover how national and organisational cultural factors have an influence on the IMC strategies of public and private universities. This makes case study the most appropriate research strategy for an exploratory design (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2012), which has already been justified for this research. Yin (2003) utilises two distinct dimensions to differentiate between two case-study strategies: the single case and multiple cases. While conducting a multiple case study, it is vital to consider both its challenges and advantages. The method can be time-consuming to implement (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), while the single case study method can provide an in-depth description of the existence of a phenomenon (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2012). Gillham (2000) recommends conducting multiple case studies in order to create superior, high-quality theory. Therefore, a multiple case-study strategy has been employed in this research. If a single study

contains multiple cases, the researcher has less observation time to study each case (Simons, 2009). However, a single case study is considered ideal when the researcher aims to study only one item (e.g., a single group of individuals or one individual from a particular group) (Yin, 2003). In the single-case study, previous theoretical relationships can be questioned, and new theoretical relationships can be explored, which requires great care. It also provides the researcher with improved understanding regarding the subject matter (Gillham, 2000).

In terms of identifying the case and which specific form of case study is to be implemented, it is important for the researcher to consider whether a single or multiple cases would facilitate improved comprehension of the phenomenon, while context is another aspect that should be considered (Yin, 2003). There is a need to follow a multiple case-study method for this research, because more than one type of university case is involved, namely, public and private universities. The major difference between the multiple case-study method and the single case-study method is that the researcher in this study needs to study multiple cases in order to better understand the similarities and differences between public and private universities in the context of the national and organisational cultural impact on IMC strategies. Thus, two public and two private universities were selected for this research. This would enable the researcher to deeply analyse the collected data both across and within the public and private universities, separately and collectively. Yin (2003) indicates that where there are similar findings in studies, or where there are contrasting findings for some unexpected reasons, employing a multiple case-study method is most appropriate as it enables the researcher to clarify whether the results are valuable. In this study, the multiple case-study method would enable the results to be critically analysed for public and private sector cases separately. The comparison of case studies would therefore offer opportunities to compare and contrast the participants' perspectives from different cases, which would increase the reliability of the data. Therefore, two national culture theories (i.e., the Hofstede model and the work of Hall), two theories of organisational culture (i.e., the cultural web model and the competing values framework) and one IMC theory (the 4-stage model) were selected for this study, with the results analysed against these theories.

Yin (2018) suggests that the multiple case-study method is considered more robust than the single case-study method as the evidence resulting from the former is

typically deemed more compelling. The method also enables the researcher to widely explore the research questions, as well as pursuing theoretical evolution against selected theories from a literature review (Bassey, 1999). This study collected data using semi-structured interviews from employees at two private and two public sector universities, which were taken as different case studies. Pseudonyms have been assigned to the universities to maintain the anonymity of the respondents (see Table 6-5), with two major types of comparison conducted from the data to respond to the major research focus of (i) comprehending the similarities and differences of the national and organisational cultural impact on the development and implementation of IMC strategies in public and private universities in the KSA, and (ii) to identify any differences or similarities among public and private universities that would lead to the creation of in-depth understanding about the selected context. Sections 6.5.1–6.5.4 introduce the two private and two public universities that comprise the four cases of focus in this research.

6.5.1 CASE 1: Private University A

Private University A was first established as a private college in 1999. It was established in the name of Saudi queens who wanted to promote education that followed the Islamic culture and values in the KSA. In 2009, the college achieved the status of university, and approved its first graduate programme in 2011. According to the qualitative standard (QS) world university ranking, Private University A was ranked in the 81–90 position the Arab region, which indicates the quality of programmes as per the set standards. Overall, the average annual student enrolment was above 1,500 from Autumn 2012 to Spring 2019. In Spring 2019, the ratio of non-Saudi students increased to 16%, which indicates the diversity of interest in Private University A. In the 2018–19 academic year, 782 students graduated with a degree from the institution.

Private University A provides updated information about conferences, seminars, webinars, open information sharing sessions, and lectures on choosing specific disciplines on social media (i.e., LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter), with 14,220 followers on LinkedIn, 17,881 on Facebook and 15,900 on Twitter, where 13,100 tweets have been posted. They have active teams on these social media platforms, as well as alumni who provide guidance and respond to the enquiries of prospective students. There is online information available on these platforms, and the social

media team at Private University A is continuously involved in addressing enquiries, as well as sharing information about current activities and future events.

6.5.2 CASE 2: Private University B

Private University B was firstly established as a school in 1957. In 2008, its status as a university and an HE provider in the KSA was approved. The founder of Private University B aimed to provide advanced-level education to the local community by following the practices of Islamic culture. It is ranked 34th nationally, and 8,008th internationally. The international student ratio has risen to 15%, which indicates diversified educational opportunities.

In terms of its existence on social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter and YouTube), the social media team for Private University B is active and engaged, with 14,934 followers on Facebook, and 11,600 tweets and 42,600 followers on Twitter, while the team has uploaded many videos on YouTube where alumni, professors, academic experts and others share information about university programmes, the uniqueness in subjects, their experiences and the industry leaders produced by the academic institution.

6.5.3 CASE 3: Public University C

Public University C was established as a public research university in the KSA in 2006. It has two campuses, which have 15 male and 10 female colleges. The institution operates based on statutes and regulations by the Ministry of Education in the KSA. Currently, 15–20,000 students are enrolled in various programmes at Public University C. It is ranked 22nd in the country, while it is ranked 4,756th globally. Through social media, it was determined that approximately 5,000 employees are engaged at this university. Public University C operates on government funding, with the purpose of providing free education to the local community that meets international standards.

Although Public University C has some social media traction (i.e., 57,400 followers on Twitter), there are only 3,269 followers on LinkedIn and 5,776 on Facebook. The institution has fewer audio, video, and text-based communications about conferences, seminars, industry experts and alumni in comparison to those created by private universities A and B on their official social media accounts.

6.5.4 CASE 4: Public University D

Public University D was established as a non-profit public-education institution in the KSA in 2003. Currently, it has 53,113 enrolled students, with 3,360 staff members. The overall objective of this university is to provide optimum free educational services while maintaining a lower level of cost. It is ranked 13th nationally, while internationally it is ranked 2,655th. Public University D is officially recognised and accredited as a university by the KSA's Ministry of Education, and currently there are approximately 30,000 enrolled non-fee-paying students. Although Public University D has followers on social media, their numbers are also low when compared with private universities A and B. For example, there are only 4,517 followers on Facebook, with limited information available on the social media accounts regarding conferences, seminars, industry experts and others who can engage with prospective students for the university.

With the four cases now introduced, the next section explores the two main types of research methods employed in social research, namely, quantitative and qualitative.

6.6 Research methods

There are two major types of research methods in social research, quantitative and qualitative, while Robson and McCartan (2016) also distinguish between mono-methods and mixed methods. The highly generic term that Walliman (2010) uses for research design is multiple methods, which implies that neither qualitative or quantitative procedures and techniques are applied in isolation. The selection of a research method involves using either one technique only for the data collection and its corresponding data analysis (mono method), or using two or more techniques for data collection and the corresponding analysis (multiple methods) to answer the research question(s) (May, 2011). This form of selection is supported in the field of business and management research (May, 2011). In multiple research methods, a single study may include qualitative and quantitative procedures and techniques in combination and may use primary and secondary data (Lust and Blume, 2016). On the other hand, a mono research method involves the use of only one, quantitative technique of data collection (e.g., questionnaire) in combination with a corresponding quantitative procedure for data analysis (Soliman, 2015). Table 6-4 describes the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Table 6-4: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods

	Qualitative	Quantitative	Author
Data type	Qualitative data is a type of data where qualities/attributes are employed while classifying the objects.	Quantitative data is a form of data where values and numbers are used to count and express the objects.	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Research design	In the qualitative design, an exploratory or descriptive research methodology is utilised in order to gain in-depth understanding and improved insights.	The quantitative design is by its nature conclusive, examining a specific relationship and testing hypotheses.	Quinlan et al. (2015)
Research reality: objective vs subjective	Qualitative data is more subjective and holistic.	Quantitative data involves using more focused and highly objective research approaches.	Newby (2014)
Analysis type	Qualitative data analysis involves using non-statistical data-analysis techniques.	The data analysis technique in the case of quantitative data is statistical.	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Data collection	Unstructured or semi-structured data are collected in qualitative methods.	The data collected in quantitative research are highly structured.	Walliman (2018)
Outcomes	Qualitative data ascertains the depth of understanding.	Quantitative data determines the probability of occurrence.	Cohen et al. (2000)
Questions	Asks 'how' and 'why' questions.	Asks 'what', 'when' and 'which' questions.	Chapman and McNeil (2005)
Final results	Qualitative data help to define a problem and develop initial understanding.	A final course of action is recommended by quantitative data.	Quinlan et al. (2015)
Required sample size	The sample size in the case of qualitative data is small and is drawn from samples that are non-representative of the target population.	The sample size in the case of quantitative data is relatively large and is drawn from samples that accurately represent the target population.	Cohen et al. (2018)

In quantitative research, the researcher works with data that are either in numerical form, or in a form that can be presented statistically in order to quantify an underlying problem (Ember, 2009). When the researcher is interested in increasing the generalisability of the study findings and quantifying the defined variables (e.g., behaviours, opinions and attitudes), then a quantitative research method is most

appropriate (Robson and McCartan, 2016). This research does not seek to test any hypothesis, and therefore a quantitative research method is not employed in the current study. In quantitative research, researchers test patterns and formulate facts by using measurable data, while this research requires qualitative data to comprehend how national and organisational culture impacts on the IMC strategies of the case study universities. Data-collection techniques in quantitative research are more structured when compared to qualitative research, while as described above, social constructionist research is flexible in structure. Although various benefits of IMC have been identified in the existing literature, the approach taken by researchers to identify these benefits needs to be critically analysed in the context of this study. Many studies investigating the strengths of IMC utilised a quantitative, opinion-based approach (Kim et al., 2004; Eagle et al., 2007), However, fewer studies have adopted a qualitative approach to investigate the topic (Phelps and Johnson, 1996; Reid, 2005). While the quantitative approach has its merits, it does not enable in-depth answers to why and how the benefits are derived. Further research using a qualitative approach is therefore necessary to improve the understanding of the target phenomenon.

Additionally, it can be seen from Table 6-4 that an inductive research approach requires qualitative data, which is why quantitative research methods are rejected for this research. This means that subjectivism and social construction are more closely aligned with qualitative research, while positivism and objectivism are more closely aligned with quantitative research, although this is not a universal truth. Based on this basic argument, qualitative research methods are applied for this research, with Chapman and McNeill (2005) indicating that such methods allow an in-depth inquiry to be conducted, which is required for this study. Additionally, qualitative research methods align subjective ontological positions and the social constructionist epistemological position for this research (see Figure 6.4).

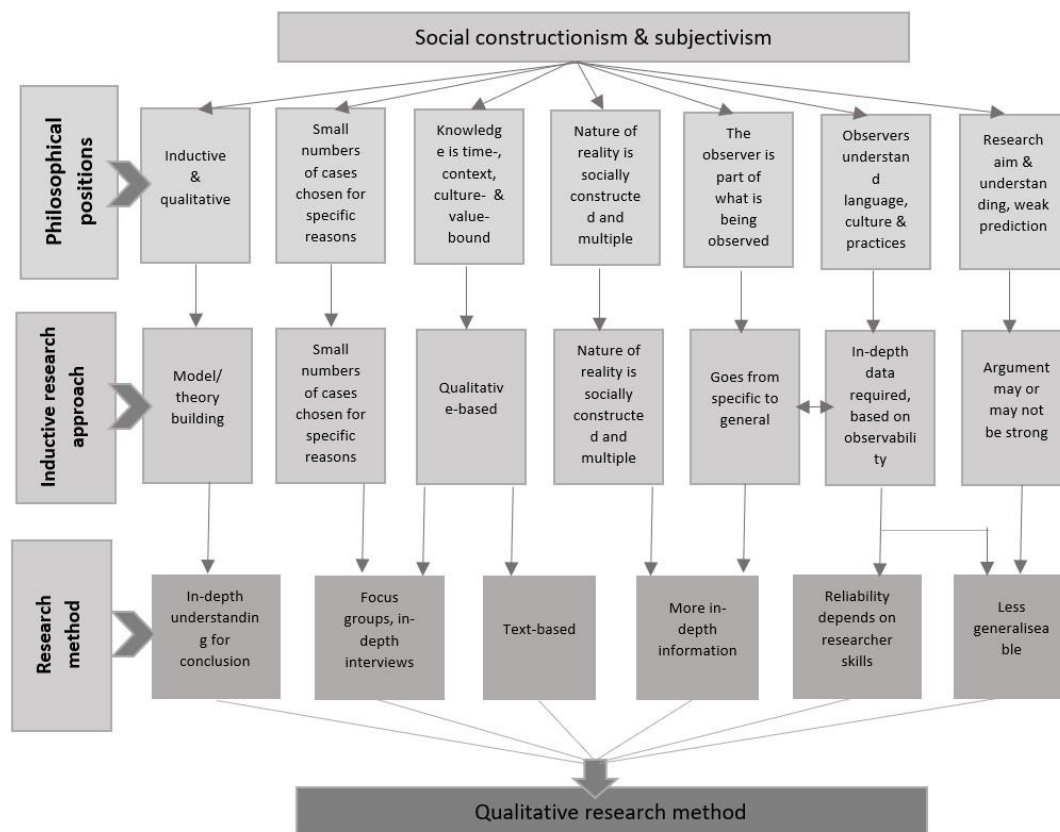


Figure 6-4: Subjectivism and social constructionism’s relation with the qualitative research method

Qualitative research is exploratory in nature (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011), which represents the first reason for the selection of qualitative research methods in this study. This research aims to comprehend the underlying opinions, experiences and thoughts of professionals, and the impact of national and organisational culture on IMC in public and private universities in the KSA by providing insights into the national and organisational culture’s impact on IMC practices. Within this, qualitative methods will help in developing theory and improved understanding of the target phenomenon. Moreover, qualitative research will enable the researcher to explore the trends in the perspectives of different IMC practitioners on the basis of their organisational experience, which should help to understand how IMC strategies are influenced by national and organisational culture. In qualitative research, the researcher works with qualitative data collected through either semi-structured or unstructured data-collection techniques (Cassell et al., 2017). Amongst these data-collection techniques are individual interviews, focus group interviews and discussions, and

observations/participation. This approach draws small samples from a target population, whereby the selection of respondents is frequently based on purposive or convenience sampling techniques (Rugg and Petre, 2007). Therefore, a pilot study and semi-structured interviews are conducted in this research, as justified in the data collection and sampling section below.

6.7 Data collection and sampling

6.7.1 Pilot study

Pilot studies enable the researcher to test and improve the data-collection instrument, as well providing a valuable opportunity to practise using the instrument (Yin, 2016). Furthermore, the interview schedule needs to be tested to identify any challenging or sensitive questions and to help the researcher prepare the necessary explanations and prompts (Cohen et al., 2018). Therefore, pilot testing is suitable when the researcher intends to improve the language and suitability of interview questions. Five participants were selected for the pilot study. The interview questions were put to these participants, where it was found that some questions produced similar responses, and therefore the number of interview questions was reduced. Furthermore, it was found that some questions featured wording that was not clearly understandable for some participants, and therefore the wording of some questions was further improved to aid in the comprehensibility. Finally, those interview questions that were understandable, different, and simple to comprehend were retained for further use.

As justified above, an inductive research approach and qualitative research method were employed, which require a small sample size with which to conduct an in-depth inquiry. On the question of who the appropriate participants for this research would be, the answer aligns with the philosophical stance and aim of this research. Baumard (1999) regards knowledge as dynamic, and ultimately conceptualises knowledge as an entity possessed by an individual who is part of a specific phenomenon, meaning that they obtain knowledge and process through their practice, as discussed above in sections 6.2.1.1 and 6.2.2, the subjectivism and epistemology sections of this chapter, respectively. Brewerton and Millward (2001) believe that knowledge is not an object or commodity, because it is embedded within practices and social and cultural values. Moreover, social constructionism holds that knowledge is constructed by the social

actors who form part of that social phenomenon, and thus knowledge is considered to be a subjective matter, which means that it is embedded by practices, and thus this study's context clearly required the researcher to choose participants who form part of IMC decision-making and who practise IMC in the universities, that is, the social actors of the phenomenon. Therefore, the selection of IMC practitioners was based on the philosophical position of this research, which led to the development of the final research framework based on the practitioners' perspectives on the topic, and which is aligned with the inductive research approach and qualitative research method. The following section describes the nature of semi-structured interviews and their suitability for exploratory research, as well as introducing the sample of interviewees included in this study.

6.7.2 Semi-structured interviews

A qualitative investigation technique in which open-ended questions are asked to respondents for the collection of subject-related data is known as an interview. The interviewer should have expertise in the subject matter, and have a series of well-planned and well-executed questions to gain greater understanding of the respondents' opinions (Brewerton and Millward, 2001). There are various types of interviews. The structured interview, for example, is a research tool that does not allow in-depth exploration of the participants' views and experiences to analyse and obtain results, due to its extremely rigid nature in terms of its operations (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). In its own approach, the structured interview is considerably quantitative and is thus also called a standardised interview. Moreover, the structured interview uses pre-determined questions in accordance with the required information in a structured form (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011). Since the researcher was interested in exploring the topic from the participants' perspectives, structured interviews were not selected for use in this research.

There is an increasing trend amongst survey research to employ structured interviews, primarily because this research technique allows the researchers to maintain uniformity across all interviews. The questions in structured interviews can be open-ended and closed-ended, depending on the nature of the target population (Chapman and McNeil, 2005). Open-ended questions allow detailed information to be collected about a specific section within the interview, whereas closed-ended questions facilitate

an improved understanding of the participants' preferences through a predetermined set of specific answer options (Chapman and McNeil, 2005). Another common type of interview is the unstructured 'in-depth' interview, which involves conversations being carried out with the aim to collect detailed information about the subject matter. Unstructured interviews usually entail the least possible number of questions and appear more like a typical conversation, albeit with a specific purpose in mind. While utilising unstructured interviews, the majority of researchers aim at building a strong rapport with the informants (Lust and Blume, 2016) that, in turn, should lead the respondents to provide accurate responses. Researchers employing unstructured interviews typically do not follow any guideline or schedule, and therefore they are free to approach the respondents, in an ethical manner, in order to gain the required detail of information about the target phenomenon (May, 2011).

Researchers are also required to keep a check on their approach in order to ensure that the respondents remain focused on the research subject (Sparkes and Smith, 2013). For beginners, carrying out unstructured interviews is particularly challenging because it has neither an appropriate structure, nor any direction in interview questions. Instead of directing the respondents to one point or another, unstructured interview questions should allow the respondents to freely express themselves insofar as possible (Sparkes and Smith, 2013). Semi-structured interviews, on other hand, enable the researcher to explore the informants' perceptions and experiences, while maintaining a fundamental interview structure. Semi-structured interviews are referred to as a guided conversation between the interviewees and researcher that offers the latter considerable flexibility. Moreover, the semi-structured interview structure will typically not require the researcher to conduct multiple interview sessions (May, 2011).

Based on the research structure, the researcher can either take advantage of the whole interview, or follow-up on any of the aforementioned responses. Semi-structured interviews require the researcher to collect information by probing the respondents, and represent the best choice when the researcher intends to collect detailed information related to subject matter with limited time available (Sparkes and Smith, 2013). While conducting semi-structured interviews, researchers will follow an interview schedule, which acts as a framework for the interview. In addition to initiating an in-depth discussion with the informants, this interview schedule enables the

researcher to ensure that the discussion travels in a direction that has been defined according to the requirements of the research.

The collection of comments and opinions that the researcher might not have considered during the preparation stages, and that may significantly influence the findings of the research project, is the key objective. Qualitative studies most commonly use the semi-structured interview because it combines flexibility and rigour in terms of the topics addressed. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are used to enable the researcher to gain in-depth insights into particular points that emerge during the interview with the informant.

Semi-structured interviews are well suited for exploratory research, while managers have a high likelihood of agreeing to be interviewed when the topic of focus is pertinent to their current responsibilities (Saunders et al., 2019). Moreover, qualitative researchers aim to collect data in a natural setting that can inform the study problem via the theoretical framework (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Thus, semi-structured interviews were used for the data collection in this research. Conducting semi-structured interviews with IMC experts on the subject matter was expected to provide valuable insights, since these professionals were practically involved in IMC decision-making, practices and activities. Face-to-face interviews using open-ended questions were carried out in person with the female participants, while telephone interviews were conducted with the male participants. Purposive sampling was used in this research because, as Pickering (2008) indicates, this approach allows the researcher to select participants who have knowledge on the topic that will facilitate rich data collection. Table 6-5 presents demographic information regarding the selected participants, who are referred to anonymously in this thesis as Int-1-D (i.e., Interviewee 1, Public University D), Int-2-A (i.e., Interviewee 2, Private University A), Int-3-A (i.e., Interviewee 3, Private University A), Int-4-C (i.e., Interviewee 4, Public University C), and so forth.

Table 6-5: Demographics of the participants

No.	Designation	Education	University	Participant ID
1	Staff employee	Master's degree	Public D	Int-1-D
2	Staff employee	Undergraduate degree	Private A	Int-2-A
3	Business development officer	Master's degree	Private A	Int-3-A
4	Staff employee	Undergraduate degree	Public C	Int-4-C
5	PR officer	Master's degree	Public D	Int-5-D
6	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private B	Int-6-B
7	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private B	Int-7-B
8	Marketing director	PhD	Private B	Int-8-B
9	Business development officer	Master's degree	Private A	Int-9-A
10	PR manager	Master's degree	Public C	Int-10-C
11	Marketing executive director	Master's degree	Private A	Int-11-A
12	PR employee	Master's degree	Public D	Int-12-D
13	Staff employee	Undergraduate degree	Public D	Int-13-D
14	Staff employee	Master's degree	Public D	Int-14-D
15	IT manager	Master's degree	Private A	Int-15-A
16	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private A	Int-16-A
17	PR officer	Master's degree	Private A	Int-17-A
18	Manager (student activities)	Master's degree	Public C	Int-18-C
19	PR manager	Master's degree	Public D	Int-19-D
20	Officer (student activities)	Master's degree	Public D	Int-20-D
21	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private A	Int-21-A

22	Staff employee	Undergraduate degree	Public C	Int-22-C
23	Business development officer	Master's degree	Public C	Int-23-C
24	Staff employee	Master's degree	Public C	Int-24-C
25	Staff employee	Undergraduate degree	Public D	Int-25-D
26	PR officer	Master's degree	Private B	Int-26-B
27	Marketing professor	DBA	Private B	Int-27-B
28	Marketing manager	Master's degree	Public D	Int-28-D
29	IT officer	Master's degree	Private B	Int-29-B
30	Assistant professor	PhD	Public C	Int-30-C
31	Dean	PhD	Public D	Int-31-D
32	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private B	Int-32-B
33	Assistant professor	PhD	Public D	Int-33-D
34	Dean	DBA	Private B	Int-34-B
35	IT officer	Master's degree	Private B	In-35-B
36	Staff employee	Master's degree	Private A	Int-36-A

In the subsequent section, the development of the interview questions is presented.

6.7.3 Development of the interview questions

Development of the interview questions was based on the theoretical framework for the research, which itself is based on the Hofstede model, the cultural web model, the competing values framework, the work of Hall and the 4-stage model. These five models are well established in the business field and enable the exploration of the most important factors of national and organisational culture and their impact on IMC strategies. There is limited literature through which to comprehend how national organisational culture impacts upon IMC strategies in the selected organisations, but there is some discussion to show that organisational culture impacts upon business strategies. Therefore, the researcher seeks to explore the national and organisational

culture's impact on the development and implementation of IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. Hence, the Hofstede model and the work of Hall have been selected to explore the most important factors of national culture that influence the organisational culture; with the cultural web model and the competing values framework chosen to identify the most important organisational cultural factors; and the 4-stage model selected to understand the most important integration factors for marketing communications. The researcher aimed to collect the data through the lens of the theoretical framework. However, the data collection was not limited to the factors presented in the framework, because the major aim of the theoretical framework is to highlight the factors through the adoption of the five most relevant theories. Hence, the framework proved helpful in developing specific and rich questions through which to explore and understand the target phenomenon through the views of the social actors.

Table 6-6 presents the interview questions, their justification and their link to the theoretical framework in order to explain the reasoning behind each question.

Table 6-6: Interview questions and justifications

Semi-structured interview question	Justification and relevance to the theoretical framework
How do you describe the organisational marketing communications process in your organisation: is it flexible or strict?	This question relates to the structure and control system of the organisation to develop and implement IMC in both types of universities in the KSA.
A- How are your professional responsibilities contributing to the university's objective(s)? B- Which achieved university objective(s) could be related to IMC strategy? C- Do you face any external challenges related to IMC implementation?	These questions relate to the organisation objectives, the role of IMC to achieve these, and whether there are any external factors that support or hinder these objectives.
What are the common practices of your organisation while developing marketing communications?	To explore the development and implementation of IMC in rituals and routines.
Could you explain the budgetary arrangement for marketing activities? How do you access the finance for marketing activities?	To explore the financial integration and control of the financial budget for marketing activities.

How do you employ advanced technology in marketing activities?	To explore the implementation of technology in marketing activities, which is part of the 4-stage model.
Could you explain the purpose and advantages of marketing for your organisation?	To explore IMC through the lens of the marketing scope of the 4-stage model.
How does your organisation: A- Recognise/acknowledge marketing communications effort within the organisation? B- Utilise a specific strategy, structure or digital presence in marketing communications? C- Utilise website and social media, etc., in implementing IMC strategies?	To explore the role of stories and routine roles in achieving marketing objectives. Furthermore, to explore the role of the website and social media in achieving IMC.
Who do you consider people of interest for marketing communications? How are process strategies developed to attract these people?	This question is related to the scope of marketing and exploring financial and strategic integration as a factor of IMC.
Could you explain how you access resources and support from the other functions of the organisation for marketing communications activities?	To explore the integration of the 4-stage model through the lens of the structure factor of the cultural web model.
How frequently is digital technology used in your marketing activities?	To explore the strategies of coordination and application of technology in marketing communications to help comprehend the integration of marketing communications.

Qualitative studies more extensively use data analysis techniques that can provide deep insights and rich context about a topic in a specific context that has limited supporting literature (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2007). It is reported that qualitative studies can uncover local context, cultural values and influences, beliefs, interactions, insights and interactions (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Thematic analysis is used for the data analysis of semi-structured interviews in order to explore, examine and understand those patterns that are common or repeatedly emphasised (Braun and Clarke, 2012). In this study, the interviews were audio taped with the consent of the participants (see Appendix 1 for the participant information sheet and Appendix 2 for the participant consent form), which was vital for the transcription of the interviews at later stages. In this study, the participants from the private universities were working as staff employees, a business development officer, marketing director, marketing executive director, IT manager, PR officer, marketing professor and dean in the PR departments of private universities A and B. From the public sector

universities, the study participants were working as staff employees, a PR manager (student activities), business development officer, IT officer, assistant professor and dean in the PR, student affairs and community services departments of public universities C and D. Using a common analytical strategy prepares the researcher for carrying out case-study analysis (Davies and Mosdell, 2006). Amongst the three analytic strategies proposed by Yin (2018), the most applicable strategy for exploratory studies is the development of a descriptive framework to organise a case study (Crowther and Lancaster, 2016). Where there are multiple cases, a typical format is proposed that first provides a detailed description of each case, and the themes within the case, referred to as within-case analysis (Donley and Grauerholz, 2012). Therefore, the researcher first provided a detailed description of each case and the themes within the respective cases of the public and private universities. Walliman (2010) uses the terms 'cross-case synthesis' or 'cross-case analysis' for the process after the within-case analysis, where thematic analysis was carried out across all the cases in this study (i.e., the four public and private universities), although the overall data were divided into two major categories, with each theme following the structure of a cross-case thematic analysis of the public and private universities.

For the within-case analysis of the public and private sector university data, thematic analysis was used, which is a process in which themes are identified that appear important in relation to the description of the given phenomenon (Simons, 2009). In thematic analysis, themes are identified through the careful reading and re-reading of the data (Bassegy, 1999). In other words, it involves recognising the patterns within the data, whereby emerging themes act as categories for thematic analysis. For the thematic analysis, this study incorporated both Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) *a priori* pattern of codes' approach, and a data-driven inductive approach. The themes are allowed to directly emerge from the data in the case of inductive coding. In the coding process, important moments are first recognised and then encoded, prior to commencing the interpretation process (Gillham, 2000).

After conducting the within-case analysis, this study carried out a thematic analysis process across cases, referred to as 'cross-case synthesis' or 'cross-case analysis' (Travers, 2001). The cross-case public versus private university data analysis involved closely analysing the previous stages to ensure the established themes truly represented the initial data, as divided into different categories/themes. Additionally,

the themes were divided into sub-themes, which are supported by direct quotations from the interviews in this thesis (Dey et al., 2006; Durkin et al., 2016). This study used inductive analysis to conduct cross-case analysis, in which the themes developed via within-case analysis of both types of university were used. The themes that emerged from all of the studied cases suggested categories, which developed broader concepts to be considered, and from this, synthesis commenced (Elliott, 1994). While integrating the data, categories were created, expanded and merged to best represent the initial interpretations (Cohen et al., 2018) on the basis of the theoretical framework, which was based on the Hofstede model, the work of Hall, the cultural web model, the competing values framework, and the 4-stage model. Rather than retaining those themes that stood alone, the retained themes were drawn from across the cases, in order to merge them under the umbrella of organisational culture and within an IMC context. Later on, a main display pattern with the final themes was created on the basis of different sub-themes aligned with the major themes. Particular decision-rules were employed to complete the data for every theme from every case. As described by Saunders et al. (2019), themes emerge through the identification of relationships and patterns in the data codes and categories that can help to answer the research question.

Woodside et al. (2014) refer to 'good codes' as those with the ability to capture the extent that a phenomenon is qualitatively rich, with most of the codes/sub-themes being decided on the basis of the meaning of full words within the data (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). After that, the analysis was completed on the basis of the similarity of key words in the data, and the similarity of these key words with the codes, structuring these under the appropriate sub-themes/codes (Marshall, 1996). The information was encoded, and the data organised to develop and identify the major themes. Manual thematic analysis was conducted for this research, and therefore 'sub-themes' were used rather than 'codes', because the term 'code' tends to reflect the use of software for data analysis (Patton, 2002). According to Gillham (2000), a theme is a pattern in the information that at the minimum describes and organises the possible observations, and at its best interprets aspects of the phenomenon.

Both the public and private universities used IMC strategies, but their organisational characteristics, organisational flexibility, and selection of media had significant differences. Three major themes (i.e., organisational characteristics, organisational

flexibility, and selection of media), and ten sub-themes were extracted via thematic analysis. The researcher followed Walliman's (2010) steps for manual thematic analysis as follows:

1) Collect comprehensive details about the organisation under study, and logically arrange the case-related specific facts (Patton, 2002; Walliman, 2010). Therefore, four case studies were developed and some background information for the organisation provided to develop the separate case study. Additionally, participation information has been provided in Table 6-5. At the first stage, all the transcripts were highlighted with different colours to identify useful quotations with relation to the national and organisational factors that impact on the IMC strategies. Therefore, the first stage analysed the data broadly in term of the impact of cultural factors.

2) Categorising the data so that each cluster of data represents a meaningful group (Walliman, 2010). At this stage, the overall data were analysed by applying the lens of cultural web theory, the Hofstede model, the competing values framework, the work of Hall, and the 4-stage model of IMC. Consequently, relevant extracts were drawn from the transcripts and placed in the boxes of the relevant elements of the cultural web and 4-stage model. Therefore, the second stage of the analysis focused on identifying data relevant to the theoretical codes, which included control and power systems, rituals and routines, stories and organisational structure, and helped to understand how different national cultural factors impact on the IMC strategies in public and private universities.

3) Examine the specific occurrences for meanings they may have in association to a case (Walliman, 2010). At this stage, relevant excerpts from the public and private university staff were aligned on the basis of the relevance of their arguments. For example, suppose some participants discussed control within the organisation, then these types of codes would be brought together to divide the overall data into different sections. Useful data were identified that related to the organisational culture, but these aspects were not covered by the cultural web model. Therefore, some new codes emerged from the data, which included leadership, organisational objectives, organisational readiness, capacity and resources, nature of communication and media selection.

4) Elaborate and interpret the data for underlying patterns, themes and trends that more broadly characterise the given case, as well as seeking plausibility in terms of whether these make sense (Robson and McCartan, 2016). At this stage, on the basis of the relevance of the sub-parts with each other, the overall data were divided into three major themes, as presented in Table 6-7, along with the sub-themes and code types.

Table 6-7: Final themes, sub-themes and relevant codes

Themes	Sub-themes	Type of codes
Organisational characteristics	Control and power	Theoretical code
	Organisational structure	Theoretical code
	Organisational objectives	Theoretical code
	Rituals and routine operations	Theoretical code
	Reward culture	New code
Organisational flexibility	Context of leadership	New code
	Segregation	New code
	Budget flexibility	Theoretical code
Selection of media	Capacity and resources	New code
	Media objectives	New code

5) Synthesise the case, construct an overall understanding and draw conclusions, with implications far beyond the case being studied (Walliman, 2010). At this stage, final conclusions were drawn on the basis of the excerpts, and the researcher attempted to extract the actual meaning from the data. The researcher aimed to interpret the data into meaningful forms, with different sub-themes and codes located under the umbrella of the three major themes that emerged from the analysis.

With the interview questions, themes and sub-themes established, this chapter now turns to the need to promote trustworthiness in qualitative research, and how this can be achieved.

6.8 Encouraging trustworthiness in qualitative research

If the key stakeholders are cooperative, then knowledge creation can be put into practice with the support of research. Thus, research recognition is important, and should be understood as viable and authentic by practitioners, researchers and the public, as well as policymakers (Attride-Stirling, 2001). One of the methods that can reassure stakeholders regarding the authenticity of findings is through trustworthiness. Guba and Lincoln (1994) modified the definition of trustworthiness by the aspects of credibility criteria, dependability, reliability and transferability, so that it can parallelise the traditional criteria of reliability and validity. The ways in which trustworthiness is achieved are quite common and familiar, and irrespective of the differences in ontology and epistemology, the criteria remain the same due to a reliance on methodological techniques and arguments (Green, 2017). There are flexible research criteria presented by qualitative researchers (Tracy, 2019), yet the original criteria are preferred due to their broad acceptance and easy recognition (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) to reflect on trustworthiness and its significance. This research applies Guba and Lincoln's (1994) criteria to ensure that credibility, dependability, reliability and transferability are met in order to parallelise the traditional qualitative research criteria of reliability and validity, as discussed in sections 6.8.1–6.8.4 below.

6.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is the extent to which researchers or readers are able to confront their experience and recognise it (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Primarily, it is the assurance that the data have been collected and interpreted properly to ensure that the results and conclusions are an accurate reflection and representation of the world being investigated (Yin, 2016). There are many techniques that can be utilised for credibility, such as data-collection richness, applying theoretical lenses to explore the context in a theoretical context, and persistent observation in a theoretical context (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Further, peer debriefs are useful to enable external evaluation of the research process, thereby increasing credibility and referential adequacy for evaluating the initial findings against the raw data. Moreover, member checking can operationalise credibility in evaluating the findings and interpretations of participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Therefore, to ensure the credibility of the research, the overall findings were discussed with the research supervisors in joint meetings at each

stage of the data collection and analysis. The overall research findings and interpretation were thus reviewed and improved through the recommendations of the supervisors, which should improve the credibility of the research. Additionally, the overall research findings, analyses and interpretation were undertaken through applying the critical lens of the developed theoretical framework for this research.

In order to achieve early familiarity with the cultural norms of the participating organisations, even before the collection of data takes place, the consultation of documents and initial visits are necessary. The prolonged engagement of the participants and investigator is recommended by Guba and Lincoln (1994), so that a proper channel can develop for the formation of a relationship or association between the interested parties. The researcher of this study belongs to the same culture and has worked at public universities. Therefore, she had an understanding of the organisational cultural setting that could help in drawing meaning from the data, while her relationship with the context also proved helpful in recruiting participants for the study. White et al. (2003) state that problems start to arise when too many demands are made to gatekeepers or staff in terms of providing access to the organisation's data, to such an extent that they are deterred from cooperation. Prolonged engagement involves the researcher 'fitting in' by showing understanding and appreciation for the cultural norms in order to gather more honest and open participant responses, although if the research topic or participants are too familiar then this can negatively impact the data collection, analysis and interpretation (Johnson et al., 2020). The only significant provision that bolsters the credibility of a study is known as member checks (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In this study, data accuracy checks were initiated directly or at the end of the data-collection process. Additionally, ten transcripts were returned to the participants to read and ensure that their transcripts represented what they had intended to say during the interviews, where all of the respondents confirmed that the transcripts reflected the meaning they had intended. The participants had the option to read the transcripts they provided at any time, where the focus was on their verification that the transcriptions into English still matched their responses in Arabic.

6.8.2 Transferability

Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that the transferability of research can be improved through providing rich information about the research context, research setting, justification for the research philosophy, and the selection of the methods and tools for the research. Therefore, this research provides a clear description of the context, which includes justification of the theories selected as the theoretical framework, the selection of the philosophical position, and the selection of the data collection and analysis tools for this research. Additionally, this research provides a justification for the selection of the four different organisations for data collection, with background information for each organisation also offered that increases the transferability of the research to the same sector or different sectors in the context of public and private organisations in the KSA.

6.8.3 Dependability

A traceable, logical and properly documented research process can help to ensure the dependability of the research (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). When a research process is evaluated by readers, dependability is the one thing that is anticipated to be judged correctly (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The process of audit reflects a dependability check for the research (Koch, 2018). In addressing a more direct approach towards dependability, the study process should be explained in detail so as to allow future researchers to repeat the study and acquire similar outcomes. In this way, the design of the research can be referred to as a 'prototype model'. In addition, it enables the reader to evaluate the extent of compliance with research practices, in order to develop a sound understanding of the applied methods and their impact, following processes set out in specific sections of text, including:

1. The design and implementation of the research, in which there is proper planning, description and execution at a strategic level to comprehend the national and organisational culture's impact on the development and implementation of IMC strategies in public and private universities in the KSA.
2. Explicit information on the inquiry process chosen to address the question of why and how the participants were selected.

3. Operational information of the data collection, addressing how the data were collected, analysed and presented in this research.

6.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability involves the researcher's method of formulating interpretations and findings from the data, in which the researcher needs to illustrate how the conclusions and interpretations were achieved in order to increase the confidence that these same results would be attained or confirmed by other researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Moreover, Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that confirmability arises after achieving all the other aspects, that is, dependability, transferability and credibility. According to the suggestion of Koch (2018), researchers should include markers such as the analytical, methodological and theoretical choices during the time frame of the study, to allow others to understand the reasons behind those decisions.

The confirmability concept is basically a concern of the investigator to compare objectivity. There are, however, certain steps that could help secure the findings as they are extracted from the informants. The researcher's own predisposition is quite impactful in terms of the confirmability of the study, as the interpretation must be grounded in the data rather than the researcher's perspectives and preferences (Creswell and Poth, 2018), whereby the beliefs behind the decisions and the choice of methods must be acknowledged (Ahearne et al., 2008). Confirmability is employed in this research through applying a critical evaluation of the similarities and differences in the data of four different case studies, with interpretation of the data achieved through the selection of the codes for the data analysis.

Additionally, audit trail evidence is provided in this research. In an audit trail, evidence of the decisions and choices made by the researcher is provided to the reader, while taking into consideration the methodological and theoretical issues that emerged during the course of the study (Koch, 2018). According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), a study, as well as the findings, are deemed auditable when there is clear ability for another researcher to follow the decision trail. In addition, Koch (2018) claims that a second researcher should be able to arrive at the same conclusions by utilising the same data, situation and perspective, but not where the findings and outcomes are contradictory. Considering the field notes, raw data, reflexive journal and transcripts, research can be systemised, related and cross-referenced with data that provide a

clear and methodical trail of the steps and decisions taken throughout the research process (Johnson et al., 2020). The overall methodological justification for this study has been given through the application of two different lenses—the theoretical framework and the social constructionism epistemology and the required aim of this research, which leads to confirmability.

The final matter to consider when conducting research is the ethical considerations, in order to ensure that no harm can come to any of the research participants through their participation in the study, as discussed in the next section.

6.9 Ethical considerations of this research

Ethics ensure that no harm is done while conducting research. Therefore, participants who are involved in research must be given rights for their protection and anonymity. In qualitative research, ethics are subtle and different from the ethics involved in quantitative research (Baumard, 1999), such as ethical issues arising in relation to the gaining of access to a group or community in order to recruit participants for research (Becerra-Fernandez and Sabherwal, 2014). According to Braun and Clarke (2012), there are rare instances where ethical failure occurs in qualitative research. Moreover, those researchers who are not sufficiently competent to address ethical issues are also unlikely to draw robust and valid results. Certain guidelines have been devised for the purposes of minimising harm, ensuring trustworthiness and satisfying professional as well as organisational requirements, to ensure the integrity of research and manage problems related to physical conduct (Carnap, 1963).

Presentation of participants: The focus of qualitative business research is on people's experiences and viewpoints (Cassell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, participants are explored based on their daily routines, and in this study, based on the work environment where they perform IMC activities. Through the consideration of local cultural norms, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the female participants. However, as a female, the researcher was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews with the male participants, and therefore telephone interviews were conducted. Due to the nature of the research, there was little potential for harm to the participants because no sensitive information needed to be collected. Additionally, no personal information such as addresses, real names, employing organisation or telephone numbers were recorded anywhere in the data collection, analysis or

presentation of the research. Furthermore, the participants' responses are labelled with codes (e.g., Int-1-D, Int-2-A, Int-3-A, ...) in this research, and therefore there is no possibility for the reader to connect the information back to the original informant.

Data storage: As Chouikha (2016) states, there may be many issues pertaining to data storage, such as data misuse or leakage. The matter of concern here is that the data may contain sensitive details such as personal information related to the participants, which could be accessed by anyone who has access to the data. Therefore, all transcripts and audio recordings were uploaded to Google Drive, so that by using Google Cloud, this issue could be minimised as no physical data-storage device could be placed in harm's way. Because of the reliability of Google Drive and its accessibility through any device, the issue of data leakage could be minimised, with all the recordings and transcripts deleted from all devices once the research had been approved by the examiners.

No harm: From all the principles connected with the ethics of research, it is claimed that causation is the most essential aspect relating to ethical conduct, in which no kind of harm should be caused to the participants involved, in order to maintain safety and security in the research. The participants were fully informed about the particular objectives and nature of the study, so that they could make an informed choice on whether to participate. Additionally, participation information was provided before conducting the interviews with the participants (see Appendix 1), and all the participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 2) before starting the interviews. Furthermore, the participants were able to change the time of or postpone the interview and were assured that they could leave or stop the interview at any time without needing to provide a reason.

Anonymity and privacy: For each participant included in research, privacy is a main aspect necessary in order to retain them. No information was acquired from the study participant that could risk the integrity of their personal information. In addition, the respondents expected that when they participated in this research, their privacy would be maintained appropriately. Therefore, their personal information was not asked for or reported anywhere in the research.

Confidentiality: Participants expect that whatever they give to the researcher for research purposes will only be used for the research itself and will be managed with

the required anonymity and privacy (Cohen et al., 2000). Consequently, it can also be concluded that no information will be passed on to anyone else. Participants entering into research should not be asked for their names, unless they explicitly grant permission for a specific purpose, such as these being crucial to the research findings. Primarily, details regarding the participants such as their names and their employment details should be protected to maintain privacy, in order to ensure proper ethical conduct in the research. Therefore, details such as names, telephone numbers, employment details and email addresses were not stored or recorded, to maintain the anonymity of the participants. The data were stored digitally on Google Drive with a personal password-protected account, and with the permission of the participants, while the interview transcriptions were also stored on Google Drive.

The following section draws this chapter to a close with a summary of the research methodology, design and approach applied in this study.

6.10 Chapter summary

With this study exploring the national organisational culture and the effects of IMC strategies that presently exist in the organisations studied, it would be difficult to bring forward a single reality to establish the target phenomenon, because these impacts are not static in nature. In other words, national and organisational culture affect IMC strategies differently in different contexts, and by applying testing and observation, general principles and laws were not found to be applicable in the public and private universities of focus in the KSA.

The researcher therefore decided to pay greater attention to how people communicate with one another in the organisational context, to comprehend the meaning of verbally or non-verbally expressed communication and help understand the national and organisational culture as it further impacts on IMC strategies in the two types of university. Therefore, as a social researcher pursuing the social constructionist approach, it was necessary to attempt to appreciate and comprehend the different experiences that the professionals encountered, rather than searching for external causes of events in IMC. This is because human actions are formed based on the sense that is made by the individual of the specific situation in which they find themselves, in this case as marketing professionals fulfilling their responsibilities. This social constructionist research therefore focuses on what professionals individually

and collectively believe or think about their IMC practices in the organisation. Thus, the researcher attempted to understand the different experiences of the professionals when they practise IMC in their organisations.

This research is not concerned with testing any hypothesis, whereby in quantitative research patterns are tested and facts formulated via measurable data, and so this research required qualitative data to comprehend how national and organisational culture impacts on IMC strategies. Therefore, the quantitative method was rejected for this research. Data-collection techniques in quantitative research are more structured compared to qualitative research methods, while as described above, social constructionist research is flexible in structure. This research started from the researcher's own observations, to explore the national and organisational culture's impact on IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. Therefore, an inductive research approach was selected for this research. Additionally, thematic analysis was used to analyse the overall qualitative data, with inductive research processes applied to the final research model on the basis of the overall research findings.

The next chapter presents the data analyses and findings that emerged from this research.

Chapter 7

Data Analyses and Findings

7.1 Thematic analysis

Qualitative studies more extensively utilise those data analysis techniques that can provide deep insights into, and a rich context for, a topic that has limited literature in a specific context (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Creswell, 2007). It has been found that qualitative studies can uncover local contexts, cultural values and influences, beliefs, insights and interactions (Creswell, 2007; Hyett et al., 2014). The thematic analysis approach is employed for the data analysis of semi-structured interviews. This approach can be used to explore, examine and understand those patterns that are common or repeatedly emphasised by participants (Braun and Clarke, 2012; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). The interviews in this study were audio recorded with the consent of the participants to enable their transcription at a later stage. The roles of the study participants from private universities A and B were staff employees, a business development officer, marketing director, marketing executive director, IT manager, PR officer, marketing professor, and dean. While in public universities C and D, the roles of the study participants were PR officers, a PR manager, PR employee, manager (student activities), business development officer, IT officer, assistant professor and dean. Despite the differences in the nomenclature of the departments in the public and private universities, only those participants directly involved in marketing communications across both institutions were recruited, thereby ensuring similarity of job role among the interviewed participants. The designation and education of the interviewees is given in Chapter 6 of this thesis (see Table 6-5). The analysis begins by exploring the organisational characteristics.

7.2 Organisational characteristics

It was found that the PR departments of the public and private universities are focusing on both traditional and digital IMC strategies, such as the use of news feeds, marketing through personal relationships, mobile web and text, and newspapers. Furthermore, the social networking and digital marketing tools of the public and private universities

are useful in creating interactive communications, student engagement and word-of-mouth recognition for educational services to attract a greater number of students. Three major themes were identified in relation to this area—organisational characteristics, organisational flexibility and the selection of media—with relevant codes generated that link to the participant data extracted with the help of thematic analysis. These major themes and sub-themes were extracted from the interviewees, and the themes that emerged from all of the studied cases suggested categories, which developed broader concepts to be considered. From this, synthesis commenced. While integrating the data, categories were created, expanded, and merged to best represent the initial interpretations on the basis of the theoretical framework, which was based on the Hofstede model, the cultural web model, the work of Hall, the competing values framework, and the 4-stage model.

Main theme 1: Organisational characteristics

Within the category of organisational characteristics, the present study has included all those factors that could influence the development and implementation of IMC strategies in both public and private universities. Organisational characteristics can be considered as those aspects that are directly or indirectly linked with the IMC strategies. This study involved interviews, which gathered data related to organisational characteristics such as control and power, structure, organisational objectives, rituals and routine operations, and the reward culture for both types of university. In the context of control and power, both public and private universities have diverse social relationships, authority, power, influence and status; therefore, it was important to comprehend these relationships to create effective IMC strategies. Organisational structure determines the task allocation, level of coordination, chain of command and communications strategy. The organisational objectives determine the long- and short-term objectives of both public and private universities, and the IMC strategies necessary to achieve those objectives. Additionally, rituals and routine operations include all those standards and processes that can facilitate the integration of marketing communications strategies at universities. Finally, reward culture is also explored as a sub-theme to reveal the reward culture's impact on the IMC strategies of both types of university.

7.2.1 Control and power

Sub-theme 1: Control and power, and its link with IMC strategies

The sub-theme of control and power as an important element of organisational characteristics was explored in this study to understand how the national culture and organisational culture within the KSA has shaped such an important theme in IMC implementation within public and private universities. As described in Chapter 2, organisational decision-making is influenced by the control, power and capacity of PR staff, which affect associated decision-making in organisations. Hence, comprehending the nuances and similarities of such use of control and power among such institutions could provide new insight into their IMC implementation. The following section explores the organisational characteristics of control and power in the private universities.

7.2.1.1 Private universities

The findings reveal that the PR departments of the private universities contain several marketing experts such as digital marketers, graphic designers and content experts. Marketing communications professionals are responsible for designing, organising and conducting marketing communications strategies within and outside the university. Due to their digital expertise, innovation and creativity become more prevalent, and they are fully responsible for the marketing communications strategies that can convey brand image and brand reputation to the target population. These aspects were discussed by two interviewees:

In our campuses, the PR department is responsible for designing, organising, evaluating and formulating marketing events. Our PR department has experienced and competent marketing experts [i.e., digital marketers, graphic designer, content experts, etc.] as well as the support of a marketing information system, which helps to conduct research related to how we can conduct effective and successful seminars, mobile app and content development, online digital marketing, print advertising and live publicity events. (Int-11-A)

In our university, every department is fully functional and is empowered to take independent decisions, which increase the chances of personal and organisational success. (Int-8-B)

The evidence from Int-11-A above indicates the capacity of the staff in Private University A to control their marketing communications internally, which allows them the power to recruit and retain staff with abilities in multifaceted areas of the IMC system, providing tactical coordination abilities to deliver IMC practices. Although similar trends were observed in Private University B, emphasis is placed on empowerment that enables the power to make decisions and control IMC programmes within the university.

In another context, while private universities A and B appear to have internal control of their marketing communications, with each staff member having the power to control processes internally, there seems to be a lack of social orientation in exercising the power to control the course of marketing events without colleagues feeling obliged to complete their tasks, similar to the low-context culture according to the work of Hall.

It was uncovered that Private University A features the widespread use of mobile apps, online websites, digital banners and social media platforms. Therefore, they are more competitive in attracting and engaging the maximum numbers from the target population. It was also found that these marketing experts have full support and are fully authorised to achieve marketing communications objectives within the given resources. Consequently, this indicates that Private University A has more functional decision-making power, as evidenced by Int-21-A:

As you know, in every organisation we have to get approval from the top management, but the selection of ways to achieve the PR objectives totally depends on the PR team.

It was identified that Private University B is outsourcing their digital marketing-related tasks because they believe that such skills are not needed in-house, and so they hire private agencies to undertake their digital marketing-related tasks, as explained by Int-27-B:

As per the nature of the digital marketing job, our management prefer to outsource activities or tasks like graphic designing, and brand page data analysis because these types of tasks are more cost-effective through outsourcing rather than hiring employees.

It can be seen from this response that the PR department in Private University B outsources specific tasks and marketing activities, while the PR department in Private University A is fully responsible for achieving their objectives, thus making it easier to

redefine the scope of marketing communications through outsourcing specific tasks with external agencies, which helps in developing further tactical coordination of marketing activities through the strategic use of control and power by the private universities. Despite the potential nature of using power to control marketing activities in Private University A, such power is also linked to the responsibility for any action derived from the power, which tends to place PR staff at risk of sanctions if errors occur, thus portraying the low-context culture postulated by the work of Hall. This context signals how the low-culture context in private universities promotes job insecurity in the KSA's private sector. The next section considers the organisational characteristics of control and power in the public universities.

7.2.1.2 Public universities

Due to the routine practices and activities of necessary communications with the population, the design and implementation of marketing communications activities in public universities is focused on specific social media networks, for example, Twitter and Snapchat. There are a limited number of digital marketing experts, so in some cases the universities have to outsource their digital marketing activities to agencies. The PR departments of the public universities must obtain approval for each marketing activity from the higher authorities, which creates a delay in decision-making:

The PR department is totally dependent on centralised decision-making and taking direction from top authorities. (Int-18-C)

There is a collaborative decision-making process for IMC decisions, as per the response of Int-18-C to the question of how they select different communication channels and who is responsible for the selection of these channels:

You know well, the role of bureaucracy is very important in marketing communications decisions as the PR department cannot choose the communication channels independently. The PR department has to take directions from top authorities and perform accordingly within the specific boundaries.

These responses indicate that Public University C has linked the control and power of the PR department functions to the higher leadership, which is a characteristic of a hierarchical organisational structure in decision-making implementation. This could be explained in terms of the limited control and power of the PR department to make

decisions regarding marketing communications, or to develop suggestions for improvement purposes. This was also underscored by Int-19-D:

The use of traditional communications with some specific social media like Twitter and Snapchat is more common, as we have to play within the specific given directions. The PR department has a number of employees, but sometimes we feel a shortage of social media marketing skills.

The use of traditional communications in Public University C, coupled with the social orientation of utilising power connection due to bonds, leads staff to feel obliged to support their colleagues' responsibility and such marketing communications to completion regardless of the unsociable hours at evenings or weekends, as per the high-context culture according to the work of Hall.

When Int-31-D mentioned this shortage of social media expertise, they were asked how they deal with social media marketing activities:

Well, so sometimes we outsource some jobs to the agencies, and we have to get approval from the top management for outsourcing.

The limited control and power over marketing activities observed in Public University C implies a reduced responsibility for the decisions made by the PR staff, who are often overseen by the higher authority. Conversely, errors arising from such public sector staff in Public University C are often assumed as part of the responsibility of the higher authority according to the high-context culture suggested by the work of Hall. This high-context culture with reduced power is one of the factors that has helped to improve job security in the KSA's public sector universities.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the organisational characteristics of control and power in the private and public universities.

7.2.1.3 Summary of analysis

Based on the available evidence gathered from the interviews and publicly available data from the university websites, private universities A and B have utilised their market-driven organisational culture to effectively provide budget approval, which improves budget control and access to funds to implement marketing communications events based on the market culture of the competing values framework, and the control systems of the cultural web model. The private universities also utilise power

structure according to the cultural web model, to effectively recruit and retain talent within their IMC practices. Both the private and the public universities provide appropriate control and power to the personnel dealing with PR to deliver a range of the latest technologies through in-house (Private University A) and outsourcing (Private University B) means to achieve the tactical coordination of marketing activities according to the 4-stage model. This has supported their market share as revenue-driven institutions according to the competing values framework. Although nuances exist among the two private universities in how they manage engagement with external agencies as part of their strategy for redefining the scope of marketing communication from the 4-stage model, where Private University B is more engaged with external agencies while Private University A focuses on in-house processes, more similarities exist than differences. Meanwhile, the same non-flexible control system seems to affect the public universities' budget control, causing delayed approval and subsequently leading to slow marketing communication events.

The indications from this section reveal that some of the public and private universities are using marketing agencies as part of their outsourcing, based on the redefining of marketing communication according to the 4-stage model, but the reasons behind this differ, with Private University B exploring tactical communication skills from external agencies, while public universities C and D primarily sub-contract such systems to external parties without much internal engagement from the PR staff. Only one PR department in the private universities undertakes strategic activities as part of its tactical coordination of marketing coordination according to the 4-stage model, which again is linked to the market culture of the competing values framework for financial drive, while the public universities outsource due to a shortage of financial and strategic skills in order to save cost according to the 4-stage model. The marketing communications function in public universities is not fully independent, as the participants mentioned that they must liaise with higher authorities, for example, for the approval for each campaign. This is an indication of power distance culture among the public universities in the KSA, whereby staff normally have limited access to their leaders, and therefore reduced control and decision-making power according to the Hofstede model of national culture. Meanwhile, the private universities' PR departments have been assigned their role and they are fully autonomous to take decisions for the achievement of their objectives, based on their market-driven culture

of profit-making according to the competing values framework. Therefore, the PR departments of the private universities are fully capable of taking independent decisions and can choose different communication channels without seeking the explicit approval of higher authorities, similar to the trends in low-context culture according to the work of Hall, thereby indicating a diluted national culture of power distance in the private universities.

7.2.2 Organisational structure

Sub-theme 2: Organisational structure of universities and its connection with IMC strategies

This theme highlights the responses with respect to flat versus hierarchical organisational structures that directly influence functional activities, communications, and coordination within the organisation. The following section explores the organisational characteristic of organisational structure in the private universities.

7.2.2.1 Private universities

It was found that in the participants' views, private universities have a flat structure that increases employee empowerment, decentralisation, interactive communication, and timely decision-making. The structure increases employee participation and recognition, and therefore staff are more involved in seeking to create the optimum marketing communications mix and attracting the maximum number of students. Due to the specialised nature of the PR departments in the private universities, they are more active in marketing communications, since they have a direct communications link with top management in the organisational structure. Evidence of this was seen in the responses of Int-9-A and Int-7-B.

Due to the extensive evidence that private sector universities have a flat structure that leads to rapid decision-making and robust coordination among different functions of the organisation, Int-9-A was asked about the ease of communicating with relevant authorities within the organisation during communication decisions:

Our organisation is much focused on employee empowerment, the level of communication and coordination within the department and across departments. Due to direct cross-functional coordination, we can directly

communicate with the President, and this makes it faster to take decisions.

There were other indications about how the communications department is directly linked with other departments, and Int-7-B highlighted the marketing department's coordination with the IT department:

The PR department of our university has specialised marketing experts who love to promote a creative communication mix, which can increase communication and coordination with internal and external stakeholders. We have created strong direct coordination with the IT department of my university.

This evidence from Int-9-A and Int-7-B indicates that the organisational structure in the private universities (both A and B) is operating as a results-driven structure that intends to complete tasks and ensure that the appropriate competitive measures are in place to drive the coordination of marketing activities.

Despite the commonalities in terms of the flat nature of the structure in private universities A and B, the communication access to higher authorities differs. While in Private University A, staff have a direct link with the leadership via an open social media account for communicating relevant innovation and challenges to the President through an open structure, there is limited evidence to suggest the same in Private University B. This is because although the social media connection exists to the higher authority in Private University B, the social media account is managed by someone who then briefs the President on matters of importance, which could lead to communication delays. Generally, both private institutions show efforts to influence marketing communications through a flat organisational structure.

Besides the flat structure nature noticed in the private universities, and although their communication at all department levels and across other levels up to the senior management is effective, the communication culture can be characterised by officially dominated communications with a paucity of personal bonds among the PR staff and across the hierarchy. This can be linked to the low-context communication culture according to the work of Hall. For example, although Private University A has demonstrated a departmental and higher authority communication route, it has not been possible to establish whether such communication is driven by social bonds. Meanwhile, in Private University B, where the mixed communication has been adopted

for internal and external stakeholders, the communication mix merely refers to non-social communication as a result of any bonds between the stakeholders or staff members.

As illustrated in Figure 7-1, the PR department of Private University A consists of three main units: marketing strategy, media planning and events, and consumer insights. The unit is fully independent in dealing with PR and marketing events, which include community events, and using traditional and digital marketing activities. It was found that the private universities have a flatter structure, which should increase the efficiency of decision-making due to the more rapid communications when passing through such a structure. It was also realised that most PR activities lead towards the marketing objectives of the organisation. Therefore, the employees have a high level of coordination and communication to address the needs of the target market.

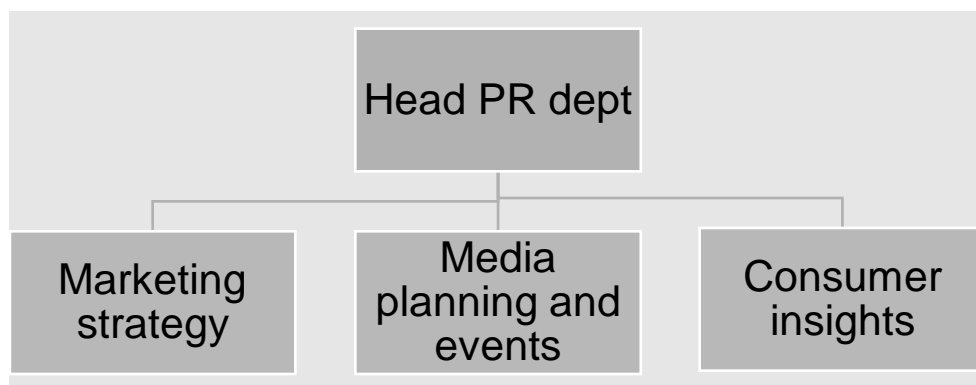


Figure 7-1: PR structure in Private University A

Meanwhile, in Private University B the structure indicates greater involvement of the main units (communications, digital, brand and consumer relations) and their subordinates (press, television and radio; media planners; creative and planning; and student success/support), as shown in Figure 7-2.

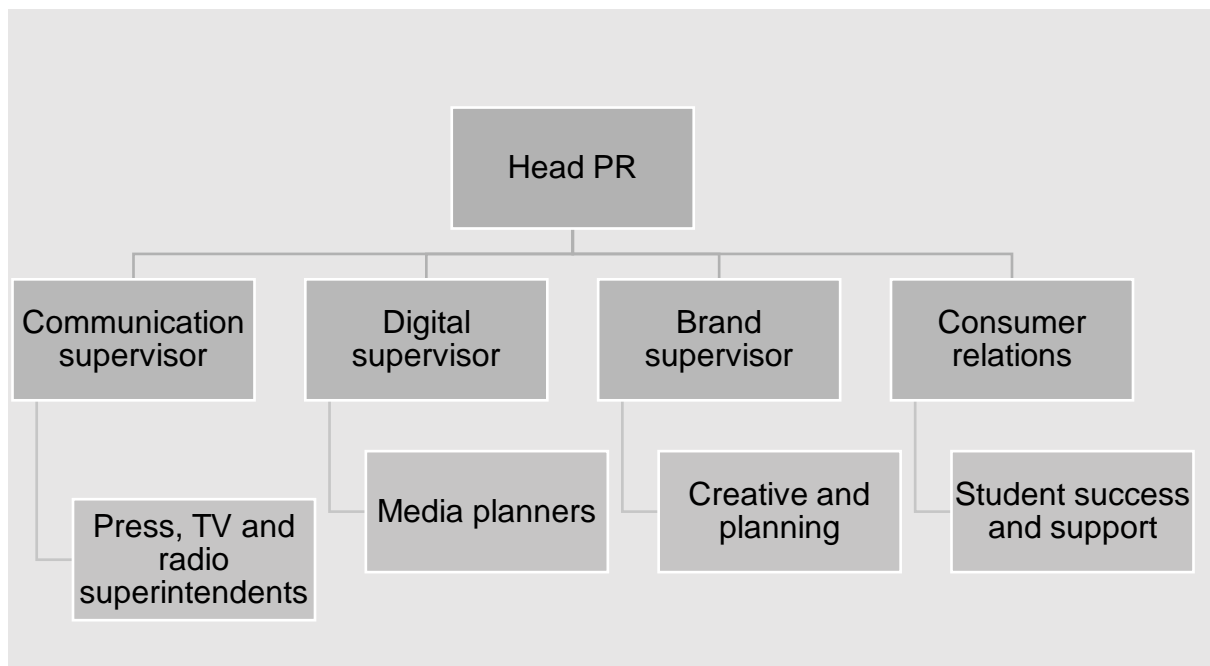


Figure 7-2: PR structure in Private University B

The structure of the PR/marketing for Private University B indicates additional functional units such as brand, digital and active press communication. Information obtained from this university's website indicate the availability of an online chat facility to support current and potential students with any information while online. This was considered a valuable feature, when considering that locating information on websites, especially for potential students, could be challenging. The next section considers the organisational structure in the public universities.

7.2.2.2 Public universities

Figure 7-3 shows that Public University C has three communications departments under the PR and media department which are student affairs, community services, and traditional and digital marketing departments, but the PR and media department is fully responsible for dealing with these departments. There is a hierarchical organisational structure, which promotes higher layers of management, greater control and influence, centralisation and occasional delays in the decision-making in public sector universities.

The structure of public universities C and D is characterised by a preference for the control system, which consist of many units under the PR department, which are

retained under the uncertainty avoidance of national culture, without motivation for change. For such structures shown in figures 7-3 and 7-4, stability becomes important, and therefore the innovation and integration of the most recent technologies in the market structure of the units could not be found.

The structure of the public universities operates with 'sales' terminologies in their marketing system, which is now viewed as a rather traditional practice globally due to the non-profit-driven activities in public universities, thus suggesting that 'sales' is an unsuitable terminology.



Figure 7-3: PR structure in Public University C

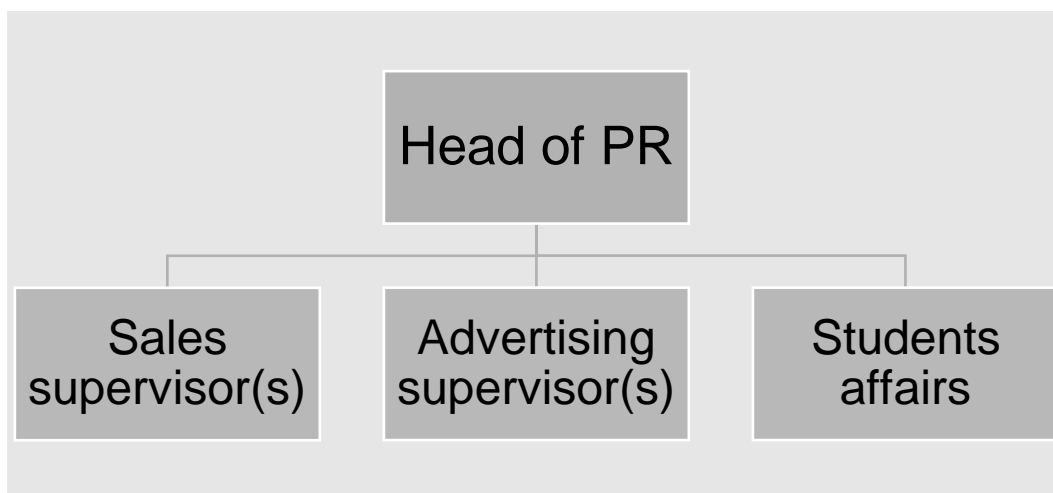


Figure 7-4: PR structure in Public University D

It was identified that the PR and media department in Public University C deals with all marketing communications activities. Additionally, the student affairs, community services, and traditional and digital marketing departments work under the PR and media department, as evidenced by Int-10-C:

The tall structure of the organisation promotes the higher layers of management and more authorities, as well as delays in routine decision-making related to PR department activities.

Questions about the major departments involved in marketing communications at the university were also asked, with Int-28-D replying:

As you know, we have a public relations and media department, student affairs and community services, but these departments are working within their own coordination and with other departments of the university.

While Int-5-D stated:

If any college wants to arrange an event or arrangement, where just sending what is needed is a very long process, then the public relations employee in charge will design that, and will edit the news in a way that accurately serves the college, but they again require permission, to make the boss happy, as this way the deanship controls PR communications even though they are specialists.

The hierarchical structure of the PR departments in the public universities has continued to drive a controlled structure with limited access to leadership and decision-making roles. This again signifies the dominance of power distance in terms of the lengthy process of acquiring approval for executing marketing events, while highlighting the tendency for merely completing the task without space for innovation, due to uncertainty avoidance through “*making the boss happy*” according to Int-5-D above.

Due to the tall structure of the public sector universities, it was revealed that there are a greater number of authority levels, which can delay the implementation and coordination level from top to bottom, with Int-1-D stating:

Due to a long and complex chain of command, most of the activities are directed from top management. Sometimes we have to cancel student affairs' activities because of a delay in approvals.

While according to Int-4-C:

There is a strict arrangement in the university, accredited by the university manager, so that it is an obligation for the university manager to follow instructions on press publication, printing, designs and directing ads for public relations to maintain our unified visual identity as a whole MoE [Ministry of Education] strategy.

In response to whether it was believed that the coordination with different departments is achieved through the top management, Int-26-B responded:

Yes, it is the case, because we have to ask the university chancellor for any kind of coordination from other departments.

Although the structure of the two public universities differs from their private counterparts, there appears to be certain differences according to the publicly obtained information from the social media accounts of Public University C, which are characterised by a large number of events posted on their Twitter page related to marketing communications. This could mean that despite the delay in approval processes, Public University C manages to continuously conduct events that could influence marketing communications, while it was not possible to locate an existing active Twitter account from the public domain of Public University D.

The organisational structure appears to have promoted social bonds in Public University C, particularly where despite the long chain of command, staff communicate relevant marketing ideas among colleagues who feel responsible for the delivery of the work, regardless of when the work needs to be completed or the approval comes through. This could be characterised by the high-context communication culture according to the work of Hall. While this could not be established in Public University D, it is generally regarded that public sector institutions are very much aligned to staff communications, potentially due to the close relation between staff in public universities, who were often locally sourced in the universities studied within the scope of this study. However, in spite of the high-context communication, one of the common benefits realised in such hierarchical structure is that responsibility during crises is often addressed by the higher authority as opposed to the lower-level marketing staff, despite the communication gap due to the structure type. This is common practice in high-context cultures, where leaders take responsibility for the errors of their subordinates and may have been the motivation for the long-term contracts awarded to the staff of the private universities in the KSA.

Other differences were found in terms of the communication departments in the public and private universities, with figures 7-1 and 7-2, and figures 7-3 and 7-4 highlighting the major differences in the structure of the communication departments among the private universities and the public universities, respectively. It is evident that at the private universities, the PR department is responsible for all types of communications activities, while they have direct collaboration with other departments. However, in terms of the public sector student affairs, the PR department and the faculty of community services are involved in communications activities, but they have to collaborate with other departments through the top management, which presents as a hierarchical organisational structure. The hierarchical structure, strict rules and regulations, authority control, control on resources and top-down communication are some of the features related to the structure of public sector universities.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the organisational structure in the private and public universities.

7.2.2.3 Summary of analysis

The organisational structure of the private universities reveal close association with the market culture of the competing values framework, while aligning their objectives to the tactical coordination of marketing communication through ensuring a cross-functional communication between the university and the outside world as part of the 4-stage model, and in the implementation of IMC programmes by the PR department, which is in line with the global composition of the units for marketing communications. This characterises a results-oriented and customer-driven structure for the profit-making intentions of the universities, and further enables a flat structure of approval and decision-making, with dilution compared to the dominance of power distance and uncertainty avoidance in the KSA according to the Hofstede model. Meanwhile, the public universities employ a hierarchical organisational structure, dominated by a preference for structure and control according to the competing values framework, which is promoted by the KSA's national culture of power distance and the uncertainty avoidance of the Hofstede model.

7.2.3 Organisational objectives

Sub-theme 3: Organisational objectives of universities and their connection with IMC strategies

The third sub-theme, the organisational objectives of universities and their connection with IMC strategies, involved the participants' views with respect to the organisational objectives of the KSA's public and private universities. The following section explores the organisational characteristic of the organisational objectives in the private universities.

7.2.3.1 Private universities

The findings reveal that the private university campuses have a significant presence of technologically advanced investments in order to accomplish their financial target of competitiveness within the KSA, as characterised by a high degree of investment in human capital, technology and overall university infrastructure to guide their direction decisiveness in exceeding expectations among other institutions as a market-driven culture in business. The private universities in this study have experienced human capital, with roles such as business development officer, content developer, marketing director, and PR officers who ensure the optimal use of advertisements and content through electronic billboards, Facebook, YouTube, online sponsored advertisements, Twitter, Instagram and student reviews on the university website. The younger generation is more involved with social and digital media platforms, which leads the private universities to align themselves with a significant technological presence via social media and podcasts, to enable a competitive market edge in the KSA. Therefore, it is more beneficial to create an active marketing strategy for engaging the maximum number of students. It was found that a mix of social media and digital marketing has increased the development of brands, because a greater number of students can view success stories and become aware of the educational courses through using social media platforms:

We can differentiate ourselves on the basis of financial objectives because public sector universities are non-profit, while we are profit organisations. That pushes us to make extensive efforts to get customers beyond language and geographical boundaries. (Int-3-A)

Our university has invested a huge amount of money in human, technology, and university infrastructure. The core organisational objective is money-making and brand-building, which is not possible without creating best-use, user-generated content to create word of mouth. Although our social responsibility is to educate the community by offering unique educational infrastructure. (Int-8-B)

Utilising the information provide by Int-3-A, Int-8-B and the publicly available information on the websites of the two private universities, it can be deduced that while both have common organisational objectives in terms of being profit-driven universities, one of the main objectives of Private University A is to be at the forefront of attracting and retaining a diverse body of students, and so it has utilised digital technologies to attract local and international students when compared to Private University B. This was ascertained by the large population of international students, both from the Gulf region (i.e., Middle Eastern countries such as Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates), as well as other African and European countries, resulting in the international students comprising up to 10% of the total population, while international students only represent 2–3% of Private University B's student population.

Despite the success of Private University A in recruiting international students, one of the factors that continues to affect the institution is that the highest ranked university in the KSA is a public university, which continues to encourage the local students to study at that public university. Nevertheless, the second-best university in the region is private, which shows the strong competition of private-university education in the KSA. Private University B has also continued its marketing communication efforts towards international student recruitment although with less success, as noted by the lower number of international students and their activities on the university website and social media content.

One of the organisational objectives in Private University B is to provide a unique education through the adoption of an e-learning system, based on new strategy to support staff members to continue their professional careers, which can engage the maximum numbers of students. This objective has seen considerable success in Private University B, with student engagement and attendance maximised compared to Private University A through an online social media campaign highlighting the benefits of online classes as well as the impact of missing classes:

We have invested much in an e-learning system, which is different from public. The e-learning system has increased the number of students, profitability, range of courses and employment opportunities, brand reputation and market share. (Int-8-B)

Furthermore, this initiative from the PR department underscores how Private University B is employing the optimum technologies to address the needs of professionals (i.e., those who are also working and thus have requirements for flexible study) and full-time students through savings on travel time and other resources. Therefore, the PR department can advertise that their university courses cater to the needs of every type of student, which can increase professional and non-professional interest in their university courses. Furthermore, the use of e-marketing, print media, digital media and social networking platforms can increase the numbers of enrolled students, which ultimately enhances the brand-building and profitability of private universities.

When asked whether private universities' investment in technology also improves the university brand in the market, and how the interviewee improves the organisational image in the market, Int-21-A replied:

To improve the external image of the university at the same time, we reach as many people as possible to be familiar with the university and its existence.

Int-21-A was also asked their opinion on whether the university exerts sufficient effort to achieve its marketing goals:

Yes, of course, from the beginning of the year, we have flexibility in the budget. We have to ensure that the events benefit us and benefit our students. At the same time, we try to improve our external image as a university, since our events and activities should serve our organisational economic and educational objectives.

It is clear from this response that the financial objectives are one of the major organisational targets that differentiate the public from private universities, and further impact on their marketing communications scope. As stated above, the private universities are not merely focused on local geographical and local language students to achieve their financial objectives, but also try to attract regional and international students. The next section considers the organisational objectives in the public universities.

7.2.3.2 Public universities

Social responsibility based on 'education for all' is considered a common objective for both types of public university in the KSA. The public sector universities' organisational objective is not to generate profit, but rather to offer education through the state's educational budget. The public universities have limited spending on advertisements, PR, e-marketing, digital marketing and social networking platforms because of the target population of local students rather than international students. It was also found that the public sector universities have a well-known brand in the market, and therefore there is no need to spend extensively on brand-building activities.

According to Int-23-C:

Our university is serving to deliver equal educational opportunities for everyone who can afford it, and who cannot afford it. Our PR department is less involved in creating extensive investment in digital media, e-marketing and social media platforms for necessary communication with the target population.

While Int-25-D reported:

The purpose of university is not serving to earn profit, but rather serving the community without charging any tuition fee. We are already a well-known brand, so we don't need to waste our money on unnecessary marketing.

Despite the similarities of public universities that operate under the responsibility of the KSA government, and the government fulfilling its educational responsibilities through public universities, it is uncommon to see nuances among the public universities in the area of community services, which could have been due to their size and state funding. For example, Public University C supports a significant charity as part of their social objectives, while Public University D does not. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education fulfils the institutions' financial needs, as well as ensuring that these universities provide equal educational opportunities for the local community. The focus of public universities is to use their financial resources effectively so that they can address the needs of the maximum number of students. The public sector universities have sufficient resources due to the support from government and other institutions, a well-known brand image because of government recognition and acceptability on the national and international stage, and are deemed more trustworthy

and have a more positive image in the eyes of students, parents and the local market, because the Ministry of Education monitors for transparency and accountability:

In public universities, the whole investment is done by the KSA government with the purpose of fulfilling the social responsibility to educate the community. We are charging no tuition fees, as the KSA government is funding us to deliver the best education, which is accepted all over the world. (Int-24-C)

Students, parents, and the local market have more trust in the transparency, accountability and degree recognition of public universities compared to private. (Int-33-D)

Based on the information gathered from the interviews and the websites, neither public university (C or D) pursues significant financial objectives due to their social services' nature and objectives. Hence, they tend to underutilise social media and digital marketing communications, which are normally perceived as a means of promoting student recruitment. However, information sourced from the public domain indicates that even these public universities have a social media and digital communication technology presence in order to meet their social responsibility. This is important, considering that IMC strategies are not necessarily for financial gain, and therefore even the public universities can strategically deploy such technologies; for example, during the current Covid-19 pandemic to meet their social responsibility through online course delivery. In this context, it was identified that Public University C has a significant digital presence and technologies for meeting its social responsibilities through online engagement while Public University D, although also having a digital presence, lacked available information and training among staff and students in deploying technology to meet the students' learning needs at the beginning of the pandemic. Nevertheless, this has now changed due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic, with significant changes noticed on Public University D's website and reactivated social media platforms, which were previously dormant.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the organisational objectives in the private and public universities.

7.2.3.3 Summary of analysis

The IMC practices in the private and public sector target a specific organisational objective: while Private University A tends to utilise IMC towards achieving diverse

campus composition, Private University B targets the use of digital technologies to achieve e-learning delivery; on the other hand, Public University C utilises IMC to attract internationally-trained PhD graduates, while Public University D has targeted a career progression campaign through industry talks using marketing communications. However, all the objectives have faced one or more hindrances, either through internal or external factors. Furthermore, the private sector universities have established brand reputation as an organisational objective, which was achieved by creating a communication network that recognised the needs of their students and their families, through collecting appropriate information from such students and tailoring university communications towards such needs, in line with the redefining of the scope of marketing communication of the 4-stage model. This was also achieved by showing the success stories of their students due to high quality and well-reputed educational courses delivered using technologically advanced equipment, and social media platforms communicating the ideas through the minds of the younger generation via the tactical coordination of marketing communication of the 4-stage model, which has created significant competitiveness as a market culture, in line with the competing values framework. This has led to attracting a greater number of customers to the private universities, thus increasing their market share. Conversely, the public universities' objective is to serve the local community, and therefore the welfare of the local community is the top priority for this sector in the KSA in order to maintain the stability of the university system and ensure continued accessibility to the Saudi population as a hierarchical culture of continuity and predictable outcomes. It was found that the public sector universities have a positive brand image, trust, and student and industry attraction, which is favoured due to the stability in the zero tuition fee system according to the competing values framework, and thus enhances the number of students as well as their level of engagement. The KSA's Ministry of Education is continuously monitoring resource allocation and use, transparency in education and other quality standards that create a strong brand image and community trust.

Public universities operate using government funds and support, which thus leads to greater control by the government national culture, but also the benefit of stability over constant income flow as part of the competing values framework's hierarchical culture. It was found that Private University B has launched an e-learning system capable of accommodating a higher number of students at affordable prices to attract larger

student numbers, and thus they have needed to allocate additional funds and effort to create their brand image and introduce their courses. Due to the online educational system, the role of the PR department in Private University B has increased through developing communications activities that can lead to a high level of student interest and brand reputation.

7.2.4 Rituals and routine operations

Sub-theme 4: Rituals and routine operations and their connection with IMC strategies

The fourth theme explores the rituals and routine operations, and their connection with IMC strategies, with responses gathered concerning how the rituals and routine operations of the public and private sectors differ. The following section explores the organisational characteristics of the rituals and routine operations in the private universities.

7.2.4.1 Private universities

It was found that the economic and competitive pressures on the private universities lead them to offer educational services that are innovative and differentiated compared to their public sector competitors. In the private universities, the arrangement and design of the communication mix is also based on these innovative features, in which the PR department highlights why their educational courses can fulfil the expectations and career growth opportunities for their customers. This trend has continued to support student progression as part of the financial and strategic integration element. The content of advertisements is based on the uniqueness of the courses that are well-recognised in the employment market, meet international quality standards, and can fulfil the expectations of both students and employers. In the private universities, the marketing communications mix has been designed with the belief that their students have pricing power. Therefore, the private universities have invested significant efforts in brand-building and trust creation, with the aim of enhancing competitive efficiency to accomplish the institutions' wider objectives, because as they charge fees, they must justify why students should pay rather than attend a free, public university. Therefore, the private sector universities are more competitive in rituals and routine communications. It was found that Private University A has a greater budget allocated to IMC strategies, new technologies, human capital and technological

competencies, and is thus compelled to communicate why it is a better choice than its competitors. Private University A targets both the national and international community, and therefore has a broad marketing communications scope, as revealed by Int-15-A:

The economic and competitive pressure always creates possibilities to offer services that create differentiation compared to our competitors. The marketing communications have content such as how courses can fulfil the expectations of both students and the best employers. Therefore, we have put more focus on communication to tell the customer where, why and how we are better.

While according to Int-27-B:

You know that we are charging premium prices as we have invested a very high budget in human capital, promotional technologies and systems, but we have to communicate to customers why we are better than public universities, which is one of our everyday communication focuses.

Among the many routines observed from the Private University A website was the use of online chat rooms to provide assistance to the website's visitors (e.g., students or members of the public), which was found to be a particularly useful communication routine that further aligns to the market culture's profit-driven system. Although the chat system appears in the Arabic language, which could serve the majority of the website visitors, this study believes that translation tools attached to such chat applications could help non-Arabic speakers to access the required support to explore information and other services offered by the university. This routine was not found on the Private University B website, although both universities have shown effective social media usage in responding to students' and other stakeholders' enquiries.

Specific rituals exist, even among the private universities, according to the information obtained from the Private University A website, such as organising a family day during the two Eid festivals, to celebrate the students' family and offer gifts and festive occasions as part of their redefinition of the scope of marketing communication. Other rituals include a 'Multicultural Day' celebration to recognise the international community present within the university. This is usually organised in a specific expression of culture, where students wear traditional attire from their country of origin, among which winners are selected for the best displayed costumes.

In the case of Private University B, an annual innovation week is organised, whereby students compete with their developed innovations as part of their communication to attract industry-related links through the tactical coordination of marketing activities.

When asked about the focus of the routine marketing communications with the target population, Int-26-B reported:

As you know, we have routine communications activities and brand-building, or we can say competitive marketing communications. Routinely, we communicate about admission dates, exams, jobs and course information, while for in brand-building communication we always try to build our brand image.

In terms of examples of brand-building routine communications with a target population, Int-36-A responded:

I can give one of the examples of our last parent event at our university. During this event, new students can come together with their parents to find out about our university, which creates a good brand image in our customer's mind. This is a regular event. We arrange it at the beginning of each semester as a 'Student Welcome Day'.

There are some traditional communications that are repeated on different traditional celebration days in the KSA, with Int-6-B asked about specific communications on traditional days such as at Eid:

Of course, in traditional communications we do celebration communications with the local community, for example, on Ramadan, Eid and National Day. We also do community awareness such as World Health Day and a nutrition awareness programme.

Based on the above examples of interview evidence and information obtained from the websites, it is clear that while both private universities mark the celebrations of different national and religious days in different styles, what stands out is that Private University A designs events on campus to honour and celebrate families during those celebrations. For example, during the national Eid holiday event, the university honours communities and students that have shown exemplary attitude and courage during the Ramadan fasting for charity and donations. It appears that the private sector universities have two types of routine marketing communications—routine communications and ritual communications—with the purpose of these marketing communications to maintain a connection with the local community that can lead to

brand-building and service awareness. The next section considers the rituals and routine operations in the public universities.

7.2.4.2 Public universities

The objectives of the public universities in rituals and routine communications, and the strategies of their PR departments, are aligned with the student affairs and community services, because these three departments perform marketing communications activities. For example, the PR department has a responsibility for moderating expenditure, with the purpose of serving the maximum number of students from the local community. Their routine operations are repetitive, as well as being based on fulfilling needs, and therefore have limited uniqueness. Public universities already have a brand image and word-of-mouth recognition, due to the direct control of the Ministry of Education, as well as the higher acceptability level of their degrees in the local and international markets. Therefore, a greater number of students engage with the public sector universities, with no special effort necessary from the PR department. It was found that most ritual communication is repetitive and similar in both public universities investigated:

The PR department is involved in routine operations as the public sector university has a brand image and high word of mouth due to the control of the Ministry. So, we don't need to spend much on unnecessary communications efforts. (Int-22-C)

Our university has responsibility, pressure to fulfil the educational needs using limited resources. We are responsible for offering services that are free for the public and fair to the maximum population of our country. (Int-12-D)

One of the objectives of public universities is to save financial resources, because they offer free education to the public as part of their culture of stability and predictable outcomes. Therefore, the PR, student affairs and community services departments are more accountable for their spending of resources, and hence they are considerably focused on the approved marketing communications, rather than exploring new means of communication. The Ministry of Education encourages these public universities to utilise all their capacity and resources to educate the maximum number of students in the local community, and thus such universities are less focused

on investing in brand-building activities. Therefore, the PR departments of the public universities focus on necessary methods of marketing communications:

Our mission and vision are to serve with full capacity but within the predefined resources. (Int-1-D)

The public sector participants were also asked whether they carry out any specific communications on traditional days:

Why not, we have to respect the local traditions, so we fully celebrate all of the local traditional events, for example, Eid and National Day. (Int-10-C)

We also arrange a community awareness programme every year. These programmes include diabetes, asthma and awareness of some other community issues. (Int-30-C)

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the rituals and routine operations in the private and public universities.

7.2.4.3 Summary of analysis

Table 7-1 below presents the ritual communications practised by both the public and private universities. Some of the routine commitments observed from the publicly available information indicate that the staff in the public universities do have routine commitments to each activity via social bonds, with staff communicating more on a personal level, which tends to drive personal commitment that is respected and fulfilled due to such social bonds according to high-context culture from the work of Hall. Meanwhile, in the private universities, the staff tend to keep the commitment at the official level, without much personal involvement due to the diverse nature of the workplace, with the staff not feeling the burden of completing tasks outside their working hours, as per the low-context culture.

Table 7-1: Ritual communication of public and private universities

Ritual communication activity	Public C	Public D	Private A	Private B
Special communication on traditional days such as Eid, Ramadan, and National Day	✓	✓	✓	✓
Family Day			✓	
Multicultural Day			✓	
Innovators' Day Graduation Ceremony Invite the Influencers				✓
Consulting hours in cooperation with the marketing association			✓	
Community awareness programmes that include nutrition awareness, World Health Day, diabetes and other disease awareness	✓			✓
Routine communication	Public			Private
University course awareness events	✓			✓
Social media engagement communication styles				✓
Open days	✓			✓
Academic updates for examination dates, results, admissions (open and closing) and reminders	✓			✓
Confrontation	High context			Low context

Table 7-1 shows broader differences and similarities between the two types of universities in terms of communications activities. While traditional days such as Eid and National Day are part of the rituals and routines, Private University A conducts Family and Multicultural days as part of their marketing routines to celebrate families and cultural diversity, while Private University B conducts an Innovators' Day and Influencer event as part of its marketing strategy. Additionally, despite the differences in the use of technology rituals by the private universities in driving their brand and market culture, they also share certain routine communications such as academic updates, open days and student events that are similar as routine communications for both types of universities. At the private universities, the focus of the PR department

is to create advertising content to exemplify how they serve students better than others, in order to attract more interest. On the other hand, the public universities offer services using the assigned resources and offer free education for the public. They also believe that they are working in the public interest, and consequently that there is no need to invest in brand-building activities because the institutions are already well known. The routine communications of the public universities are based on fulfilling the repetitive, necessary communications. The PR department and marketing campaigns do not devote higher expenditure to targeting students beyond the university's geographical area, because their objective is to meet the demands of the local community. For the public sector universities, there are predefined rules, regulations and procedures with respect to operating within the finite resources and capacity; therefore, there are limited opportunities to conduct marketing through more innovative methods. Based on information sourced from the social media accounts and websites, confrontation among staff was observed to differ as in the public universities the PR staff tend to handle anger and avoid confrontation due to social bonds similar to the high-context culture, while the private university staff were observed to argue or confront each other more directly, similar to the low-context culture.

Some communication differences were found across the two types of university, as described in Table 7-2 below.

Table 7-2: Marketing communication element of the public and private universities

Communication elements	Public	Private
Geographical attention	Greater focus on local students	Attempt to attract local and international students as a market-driven communication approach
Language of communication	Arabic, due to the greater focus on local students	English and Arabic language used to extend the competitive edge
Conferences	No evidence	Different conferences conducted to attract customers and for brand-building
Objective of open day	Student awareness about courses	Attraction of current and future students, and focused on the brand-building of market culture

7.2.5 Reward culture

Sub-theme 5: Reward culture and its links with IMC strategies

This sub-theme explores the employees' reward culture in both types of university, and how this affects marketing communications activities and practices. This section considers the motivational levels of staff to achieve their marketing communications objectives, with the first section exploring the organisational characteristic of the reward culture in the private universities.

7.2.5.1 Private universities

The reward culture of private universities aims at retaining and attracting new human capital. Therefore, these universities have more marketing experts to guide their productivity and direction decisiveness in achieving their marketing communication goals. It was found that a competitive reward system (i.e., cash incentives, career development opportunities and success stories) has increased the level of employee engagement, and the efforts to engage stakeholders and improve educational services, with the purpose of becoming an industry leader. Moreover, the findings suggested that many skilled employees in the public universities have been performing their duties for a long period of time, with new human capital entering into private universities more quickly because of their attractive salary packages, skills' improvement, learning opportunities and positive reputation from an employment perspective. The results reveal that this new human capital has improved the use of social media and digital technologies, with the PR departments now better able to engage a maximum number of students and other stakeholders:

I think the admission administration gives a bonus, like our department, because they are specialised in increasing student numbers ... because they work overtime, to achieve their target. (Int-32-B)

Our university has a competitive reward system. The best marketing employees are receiving rewards on a quarterly basis; for example, cash incentives as well as positive comments in employee performance evaluation reports. These marketing experts have created the best use of social media and digital marketing, so student numbers have increased now. (Int-17-A)

I joined a private university because they are more competitive, so there are more chances to learn as a marketer. (Int-8-B)

The employees of the PR departments are more motivated to engage with their professional role due to this unique financial and strategic integration of reward linked to meeting the organisational targets. There were many inspirational success stories, such as some employees of the PR departments being promoted to the executive level due to their hard work and the culture of employee recognition. These types of success stories have created greater attraction for new human capital, as well as a high degree of employee engagement for existing employees:

I can give you another reward example. There are a few examples of how the people of the PR department are promoted to executive marketing director from low designations. These success stories always motivate us to make more effort. (Int-17-A)

We benefit from annual promotion exercise in the PR department, which tends to increase our salary and benefits yearly compared to other universities. (Int-2-A)

I can give an example, the President Breakfast Morning event. The major purpose of this event is for the appreciation and coordination of all employees to encourage them towards common organisational objectives. (Int-34-B)

Among the main nuances existing between private universities A and B is that while Private University A operates a policy for the annual promotion of high performing staff and salary increase, Private University B usually offers 2- and 3-year promotion guidelines, which tends to cause a preference for employment in Private University A compared to Private University B. This has caused significant financial and strategic integration of the marketing communication staff in Private University A. The next section considers the reward culture in the public universities.

7.2.5.2 Public universities

The results reveal that public universities have shifted their reward culture from static to competitive. Reward and performance are more interlinked, due to industry pressure and the demand for new human capital. The more permanent nature of the position, and the professional status as a government employee with greater role security are the main attractants for new employees. Therefore, more qualified employees are joining public universities at lower designations. The control of government, high attraction for students, a high degree of job security and a positive brand image are some of the main reasons that qualified people want to remain a part

of the PR, student affairs and community services departments at the public universities. Recently, the public universities have introduced more rewards and promotion opportunities, with the purpose of developing a culture of employee recognition and appreciation. Therefore, the performance of the PR department is improved, and employees more actively participate to disseminate information among community members:

I believe our university has recently shifted focus from static reward to more competitive. The PR department and other employees are working hard to get more reward and promotion. More reward and promotion opportunities increase competition among employees, and we also get paid for overtime. (Int-23-C)

Of course, public relations' staff always receive the maximum wage throughout the year. For example, we were in a meeting at the Intercontinental Hotel today, which is a Saturday [weekend], and they were being paid overtime for this. (Int-14-D)

There is a growing interest in working within public universities among professionals, due to the long-term contracts and secure nature of employment at public sector universities, which provides stability for staff. However, over the years this has also reduced opportunities to recruit fresh employees with new skill sets, which could drive the competitive advantage in implementing marketing communications in public universities:

In our culture, a government job is known as a permanent employee who has job security and a greater number of benefits. So even those employees who have a higher education love to start from a low designation in the PR department. But still, the majority of employees who are senior are not familiar with digital marketing communication tools because they have limited awareness. (Int-18-C)

As I told you earlier, due to the shortage of digital experts, sometimes we have outsourced some jobs, so I would suggest arranging a training programme for the PR department. (Int-31-D)

Differences exist among the public universities' reward culture in such a way that in Public University C there is effort to increase the digital awareness among staff, despite the non-familiarity with digital marketing at many levels, which could provide opportunity for additional reward for those staff that develop such communication skills.

Emerging from the interview context above, the characteristics of public universities C and D include long-term or permanent contracts as a system of reward, developed based on the social orientation between the employer and the employees over time, such that the staff feel a sense of job security at the public universities promoted by the long-term cordial social bonds among the staff. On the other hand, the evidence from private universities A and B indicates a fixed-term contract reward system, which is considered a more market-driven reward of renewal based on performance, typically after a three-year review. Such reward system is characteristic of low-context culture that features fewer social bonds with staff, instead prioritising a market-driven reward system according to the work of Hall.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the reward culture in the private and public universities.

7.2.5.3 Summary of analysis

The results have highlighted that private universities have a competitive reward culture, which has motivated achievement and a customer-driven culture in such institutions according to the competing values framework. The PR departments of the private universities reported success stories about how employees are promoted from lower levels to an executive position due to the results-driven market culture in private universities. The success stories of these marketing professionals are directly linked with their efforts to optimise the use of social and digital marketing, with these stories creating increased employee engagement, competition, and attraction for new human capital based on the competing values framework. It was also found that the attractive salary package, skills' improvement and learning opportunities, and the positive reputation of private universities have increased the motivation of employees to perform tasks effectively. Meanwhile, for the public universities, the participants highlighted management's efforts to shift the focus from a static reward system to more competitive reward and ensuring that reward and performance are more strongly interlinked. This is driven by the gradual transition from high-context culture based on the work of Hall, whereby reward is somehow linked to relationships, to low-context culture where relationships carry little-to-no importance, which represents dilution from the KSA's national culture of power distance, as competitive salaries are primarily intended for those in leadership positions according to the Hofstede model. The results

reveal, however, a lack of digital marketing skills, and so in some cases public sector universities have to outsource their digital marketing activities, which is inconsistent with the tactical coordination of marketing activities proposed by the 4-stage model. Furthermore, there is a need to offer more training and development opportunities to employees so that they can improve their knowledge and skills.

The culture of providing permanent contracts has led to significant staff stability, with employee status, job security and salary packages some of the strengths of employment in public universities, which reflects the competing values framework's stability element, although there is less alignment to the staff output to deserve such generous treatment with improved marketing communication outputs, and therefore the employee turnover rate is very low. This has continued to limit opportunities for recruiting new skill sets that could pave the way for innovation and competitiveness, as suggested by the competing values framework.

Private University A also tends to operate an annual promotion of staff across the institution, which comes with financial benefits as a part of their measures to boost the financial and strategic integration of marketing communication in such universities, in line with the 4-stage model, while Private University B promotes staff every three years.

7.3 Organisational flexibility

Main theme 2: Organisational flexibility

In terms of organisational flexibility, the current study has considered all those direct and indirect factors that can impact the IMC strategies in both public and private universities. Organisational flexibility can be defined as the factors of leadership, budget flexibility and segregation, and how they influence the development and the implementation of IMC strategies. In other words, organisational flexibility allows the organisation to formulate, design and modify IMC strategies that foster new changes and adaptability. In the context of this research, the study has unpacked the role of leadership, flexibility in budget, segregation with respect to workplace changes, the use of IMC practices and the overall marketing communications strategies. Therefore, budget, segregation and the context of leadership are integral factors that are explored

under this theme in terms of affecting the working environment in the context of IMC practices.

7.3.1 Context of leadership

Sub-theme 1: The role of leadership in universities and its connection with IMC strategies

The first theme, the role of leadership in universities and its connection with IMC strategies, emerged from the interview responses regarding which leadership style is implemented and its influences on the roles, tasks, processes, structures and culture of both public and private universities in the KSA. This study explored leadership characteristics including their genders and nationalities. The following section explores the organisational flexibility in the context of leadership in the private universities.

7.3.1.1 Private universities

It was found that leadership in the private universities has built competitive pressure to use the optimum marketing practices and technologies. Utilisation of the best digital marketing tools is thus more competitively deployed in the private sector as compared to the public sector universities. Due to competent leadership, the interconnectedness, collaboration and coordination of PR with other organisational functions of the university and faculty members is improved in the private universities.

Data gathered from the websites of the private universities indicated that in Private University A, the role of female leaders is more pronounced; for example, the position of the university Dean of Student Affairs, Deputy Registrar, and two of the four unit-heads in the PR department are women. This is comparatively similar to Private University B, where one Dean, and two heads of departments are women, while one out of the four unit-heads in the PR unit is a woman. This is considered a new narrative of considering the masculine nature of leadership in the KSA, which is a male-dominated domain. In such private universities, it was noticed that the competitive market culture has led to the utilisation of skills and performance by offering leadership positions regardless of gender, despite the male-dominant leadership positions in many organisations in the KSA, including public universities. The power distance index has scored the KSA higher, thereby creating a leadership style that may not

necessarily be cascading staff engagement, and thereby limiting decisions to only a few individuals at the top of the organisational structure, who are usually male. The paradigm shift in appointing females in significant and sensitive positions based on performance and skills is providing a new dimension to the traditional culture of masculinity and power distance, as social media websites such as Twitter and WhatsApp provide evidence of more engaging female leaders in private universities, thereby leading to more effective leadership, and hence promoting greater gender equality. This is considered a major diversion from the typical KSA national culture of male dominance over women.

Meanwhile, the leadership in the public sector universities is male dominated, reducing the potential for diverse, competent leadership because the majority of the authority is in the hands of men. Analysis of the websites and limited social media accounts of the public universities could not locate any of the university executive members as female, although a deputy deanship position was given to a female in the College of Communications in Public University C, while none of the PR leadership or unit heads are women, apart from two female staff members responsible for desk office communication in the university, who have limited roles and agency to influence decision-making or make appropriate contributions in IMC. Moreover, the female dean and two staff members usually work in isolation from their male colleagues in the public sector university, due to the influence of the KSA's national culture that tends to separate genders. Therefore, men and women work in isolation from each other, which also reduces the positive diverse workforce advantage for development and the implementation of IMC activities. Meanwhile, in the private universities, males and females work together in administration and as leaders at different levels of the organisational hierarchy. The private universities' leadership encourages the development of human capital, technology adoption and implementation with the purpose of delivering high quality and valuable services to the stakeholders. The leadership of the private universities encourages diversity and equal opportunities in terms of gender, and thus women can contribute to the success of marketing communications as part of gender's role in creating a diverse workplace. The interview responses supported these findings as follows:

The private university leadership wants to promote more chances to women for contributing to the growth and success of the educational sector. (Int-11-A)

We work at a university that has continued its efforts to drive equal opportunity for male and female staff, and even among students' leadership roles. Female staff are now allowed to take leadership roles in leading marketing events such as open days, and other social media campaigns. (Int-29-B)

The next section considers the context of leadership in the public universities.

7.3.1.2 Public universities

The responses obtained from the participants and information gathered from the websites of the target universities highlighted the organisational behaviour of the public universities, which is similar to that of a hierarchical type. Meanwhile, the private universities have the overall motive of financial gain through their marketing communications that lean towards a market culture as part of their external culture within the organisation. Although the market culture is usually aligned to creativity and innovation, the private universities are still partly influenced by the KSA's national culture of uncertainty avoidance, as their operational licences are still under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Therefore, despite the many innovative improvements achieved in marketing communications, they have limited power for independent innovation, and hence fall short of adhocracy culture, which could create new gender diversity in the workplace. This can be mapped according to the competing values framework, as shown in Figure 7-5.

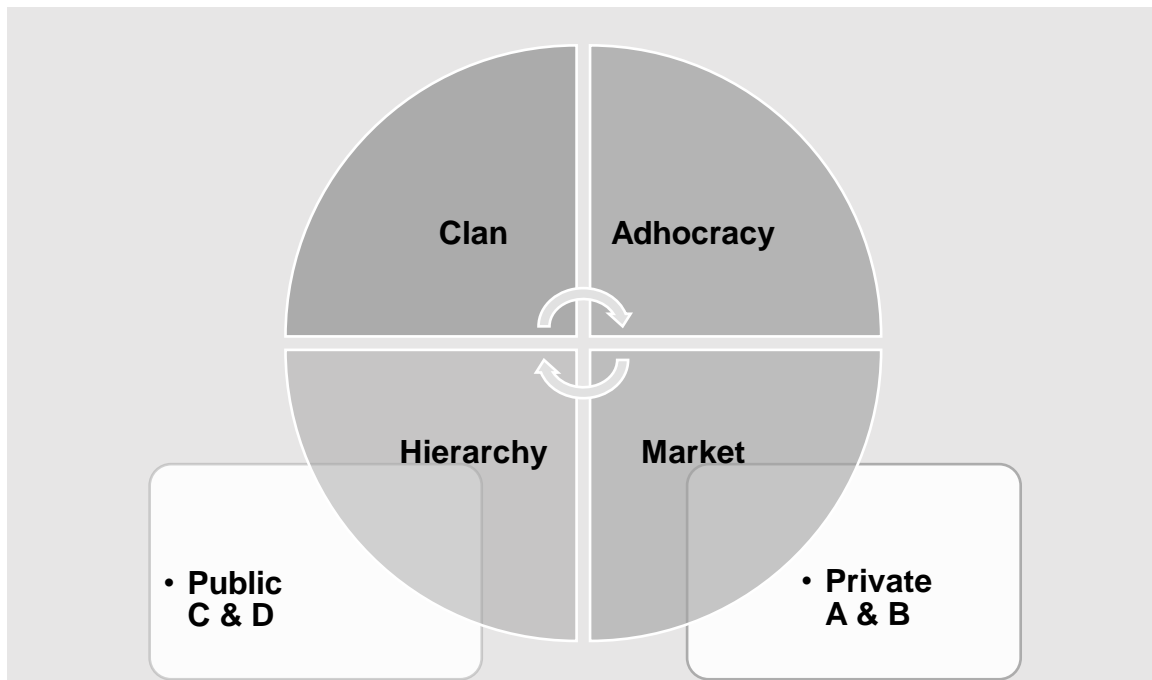


Figure 7-5: Mapping the institutions against the competing values framework

The public universities are operating in a controlled organisational culture, with expectations to adhere closely to the normal guidance and operations for conventional non-profit-making universities, thereby keeping the culture more internal to the staff operations. This is characterised by the power distance, leading to staff having no regular contact or access to the organisational leaders, but rather receiving top-down directives from the leadership. This also falls short of the clan culture of collaborative working as the staff work in isolation, thereby limiting the tendency to share ideas or benefit from peer-learning.

The existence of a high power distance index among the public universities in the KSA has led to wide distance between the staff and leadership in this context. In most cases, rarely do events occur that may result in collaboration between the leadership and other staff, rendering the public universities very stable and routine, but non-innovative due to the lack of collaboration that is typically pronounced by the clan culture. One common alignment realised from the male-dominated leadership is the existence of high-context culture based on the work of Hall, whereby despite the wide power distance between the leadership and staff, there is a sense of responsibility taken by the leadership in the case of error by the lower-level staff. This is conversely different in the private universities that appear to have a low-context culture that

exposes staff members to the risk of consequential liability for committing errors, again as described by the work of Hall. Although the contemporary use of social media brings significant awareness of university activities to the leadership, as evidenced by the publicly available data from the public universities' websites, there appears to be limited training of staff in modern marketing, which is not unrelated to the non-profit nature of the universities. The most common activities noticed on the minimal social media activity contain basic posts or pictures, without coherence arrangement or display to achieve a specific marketing objective, which rather involve communications related to student registration, Covid-19 restrictions and the academic calendar, among others.

One common trend noticed from the data gathered from the websites is that despite the uncertainty avoidance depicting some of the hierarchical leadership behaviour in the public universities due to the KSA's national culture, there is a growing effort by some of the public universities outside of this study to gradually transition from a hierarchical culture to a clan culture, such that public universities are now ranked highest in the KSA, albeit closely followed by their private sector counterparts. Such public universities have a robust social media presence and utilisation of digital technologies to ensure wider collaboration and marketing, especially in research and teaching excellence.

In terms of gender and accountability in the public universities, Int-19-D stated:

Our campus deans prefer to maintain accountability and reporting so that everyone can perform their routine tasks with proper monitoring and control. Most of our deans are men and have been serving for many years. These deans habitually create an environment that ensures responsibility and accountability for everyone.

While Int-18-C discussed how positions are filled based on the education and experience, which tends to lead to males filling the role:

The university structure operates a structure based on the quality of the degree and experience in the field, and such positions are occupied by men mostly due to speciality.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the context of leadership in the private and public universities.

7.3.1.3 Summary of analysis

Based on the evidence gathered from the interviews, characteristic differences and a number of similarities were observed in the leadership context among the public and private universities in the KSA. The leadership in the private universities is composed of both genders, with male and female leaders found in some of the roles, although the proportion of male leadership still outweighs the females. There are indications of equal gender opportunities among the marketing communications staff, which are characterised by the masculinity and femininity of the Hofstede model, despite the widely accepted dominance of male leadership in the KSA. Although differences exist among the private universities' leadership styles, their similarities are more strongly linked than their differences. Meanwhile, in the public universities, the same KSA national culture of male-dominant leadership was found, with greater male than female dominance according to the Hofstede model, although gradual changes were noticed to be emerging more generally in the KSA's public universities, with several leadership roles now given to women in marketing communications and other departments such as communications. These continue to show the emergence of the more market-based culture, although the marketing communications do not support market-driven achievement according to the competing values framework.

7.3.2 Segregation

Sub-theme 2: Segregation and its link with IMC strategies

This theme focuses on how the segregation between public and private universities influences their IMC strategies, with the following section exploring organisational flexibility in terms of the segregation in the private universities.

7.3.2.1 Private universities

PR employees at the private universities engage in professional networking with industry experts, with the culture of social and digital marketing teams promoted under their leadership. The skills and experience of diverse social and digital marketing teams have developed social interaction and social engagement services, which have improved educational services as well as the brand image. The PR departments of the private universities are independent and able to take strong decisions, which has

increased the culture of confidence, competition and swift decision-making, and can be seen in Int-11-A's description of how the best talent is recruited into the department:

We try to hire the best talent from the market, which is beyond gender or nationality boundaries.

The same interviewee was asked whether there is gender distribution in the PR department:

Why not, we give equal opportunity in all departments for males and females. We are just concerned about talent, nothing about gender or nationality.

Int-27-B shared this view of embracing diversity to recruit the best candidate for the position:

There are diverse types of employees working who have achieved educational degrees from developed countries and the employees could be from any nationality. Employee diversity has brought different skills that improve our marketing communications strategies.

Int-11-A confirmed the presence of other nationalities in the private sector marketing communication units from developed countries, where educational certificates are of HE quality. Although within the scope of the four universities considered in this study no non-KSA leadership in such a department could be found, the publicly available information from other private universities (i.e., those not considered in this study) reveal non-KSA nationals of both genders leading units, departments and faculties, in contrast to the dominant culture in the KSA. This is an indication of segregated power structure, as well market culture, which tends to drive new paradigm shifts from the Saudi national culture context.

Int-27-B was asked about the mentioned focus on a diverse workforce, and what type of diverse workforce they were referring to:

As a female you know that there is male-dominated leadership in our country, but it is not the case at our university because we facilitate men's and women's collaboration in the workplace, which creates the chance for innovation.

The results reveal that private universities in the KSA have created a diverse culture that includes both women and men in the workplace, while the public sector is more respecting of the local cultural norms in offering a separate environment for men and

women. It was found that the PR departments of the private universities have provided opportunities to a greater number of women, giving the departments a diverse workforce advantage, in that the team members are able to learn from that diverse workforce in the university. The combination of men and women in teams has improved idea-sharing and job performance in the PR departments of the private universities. The strategic focus of the PR department is to enhance the use of digital and social technologies in engaging more students, attracting positive reviews and recommendations, and increasing the capacity to accommodate the maximum number of students. The diverse human capital and growth opportunities for employees have increased competition among the private universities, while the public sector is also more attractive to talent because of the greater job security and attractive benefits.

Int-16-A shared their experiences as a female professional at a private university:

I believe the private university has created the culture to encourage and employ women so that they can equally contribute on both the marketing department and academic side. Currently, there is a greater number of women working in the PR department, and this impacts on performance.

While Int-6-B discussed the benefits of PR diversity on the outcomes of the marketing campaigns:

I think the diversity and growth opportunities for PR employees have created more successful marketing campaigns, high admission rates, high profit and growth rate, and a positive image in the local and international market.

The evidence from Int-16-A and Int-6-B shows that the gender empowerment drive in the private universities is creating a more level playing field for women to contribute to the universities' diversity and inclusivity principles, which is a dilution from the KSA's national culture of a segregated gender system. The next section considers the segregation in the public universities.

7.3.2.2 Public universities

The participants shared that the male culture is more dominant in society, as well as in the leadership of the public sector universities. Since only men work in the PR and student affairs departments of the selected public universities, no women were

available for inclusion in this study, while the private universities have both men and women who play a role in the marketing communications activities. The student affairs department of both public universities request that female lecturers be involved in different student events for the women's section of the university, but these women still do not engage in direct collaboration and coordination because they work in isolation. In fact, public universities are highly influenced by the national culture of the KSA, which promotes male dominance, and especially in key employment positions, as evidenced in the interviews:

The male dominance or male leadership culture is more prominent in our national culture, as well as leadership in public universities. Therefore, low numbers of women are employed in the administration department of public universities. I think equal chances of women's employment can improve the performance of the PR department. (Int-20-D)

The national culture and social structure increase restrictions for women to perform leading roles. Therefore, women have more isolation from men in administrative work. (Int-22-C)

It was found that employees are happy to work in public sector organisations because of the high job security, as well as the attraction of a government position. It was also found that financial and strategic decisions are not independent in the PR departments of the public universities, and that the focus of these institutions is on increasing the level of efficiency by saving resources:

Because of the authority's power in some hands, there is a centralised power system that I think discourages the bottom to top collaboration of talent. (Int-4-C)

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the segregation in the private and public universities.

7.3.2.3 Summary of analysis

The private universities have both men and women working in different roles of marketing communication, which is linked to the Hofstede model of masculinity and femininity distanced from the male-dominant roles and systems within the KSA's national culture of power distance, which provides encouragement for women to choose diverse professions. It was found that the private universities have a more diverse workforce, including nationalities from developed countries providing a

significant contribution to the innovation of the marketing strategies in the market-driven culture of the private universities under the competing values framework. These employees have marketing and professional networking experience based on practices common in developed countries, and therefore the PR departments of the private universities are performing well based on this diversity in the workforce. The financial and strategic integration of the decisions made by the PR department is independent, which increases the employee diversity and work performance. Meanwhile, the public sector marketing communications activities are based on the strict organisational policies, which are under the authority of the senior management. Therefore, centralised power is a facet of segregation in the public sector domain. The strategic decisions are made by the male leadership, and top leadership alone are responsible for the decision-making, without any involvement of lower-level employees and females.

7.3.3 Budget flexibility

Sub-theme 3: Budget flexibility's impact on IMC strategies

This sub-theme is related to the flexibility of the marketing communications budget in the public and private universities. It was found that the public sector universities have more flexibility for their different marketing communications activities because of the specific budget allocated to different events or activities, although the PR and student affairs departments have to consult top management to gain approval for each event individually. Meanwhile, the private universities' PR departments are fully autonomous in taking marketing communications decisions within their budget to decide different marketing activities. The following section explores the organisational flexibility in terms of the budget flexibility in the private universities.

7.3.3.1 Private universities

It was revealed that the private sector universities' budgets are more specific for informative communications, which include marketing campaigns and performance bonuses for staff, because performance rewards are considered at the time of setting the budget, which increases the employees' motivation to make greater effort in their marketing communications activities. Below, three of the interviewees provided their views on the budget flexibility in the private universities:

I am happy that the campus dean always approves our marketing campaign budget, as well as rewarding us with extra bonuses and promotion opportunities based on successful marketing campaigns and high admission rates. (Int-32-B)

I am responsible for student events, but at the beginning it should be approved by the PR manager, and then by the President. We get the early approval and budget at the beginning of the year, and start the implementation phase for these events. (Int-16-A)

Our marketing activities are planned and implemented in a timely manner due to the funds' availability for each event prior to its scheduled date. (Int-29-B)

The above excerpts reveal that the private universities' PR departments have a specific budget for their marketing communications strategies, which is usually approved and accessed in a timely manner, and tends to allow improved productivity, performance and achievement of the organisational goals from the start of the year. This indicates a less controlled culture of budget, which could be the reason for the success of the marketing communications in the private universities, as a step towards the financial and strategic integration of marketing activities. After that, PR staff are fully authorised to arrange different marketing communications events to achieve assigned objectives based on their market-driven culture, and therefore they do not need to pass through the approval process for different events. The next section considers the budget flexibility in the public universities.

7.3.3.2 Public universities

The public sector universities are stricter in their annual budget, as this is based on the annual government budget. Therefore, in some cases they cannot request extensions to the budget for marketing communications activities:

We also need a flexible budget so that we can manage work. Sometimes you receive community participation or might be asked about a university participating with interactive stakeholders by the state or by the community. Then you face unexpected issues in the budget that force you to ask for extra budget to cover the events. (Int-5-D)

When asked why there is more budget requirement in the public sector, as the public sector already appears to have a sufficient budgetary allocation, the same interviewee responded:

You allocate a budget because you may want a famous media personality, and so there is a need to request authorisation from the top to increase the budget.

It was also highlighted by the participants that public sector universities rely on student funds, and so in some cases they face budgetary challenges:

In a big way, of course, the budget is like what I told you, which is the students' fund. This is the budget that we can return to. Unfortunately, we don't have what it means. We do not have advertising in the system of the university so far. In their mind, we are now heavily dependent on the budget in the students' fund, so all the activities, programmes and courses are offered to the student through this budget. (Int-18-C)

This issue was explored further by asking the question, "You said, "The Dean is the person to whom you return to approve plans, budgets, programmes and everything in the marketing activity", right?", with Int-30-C replying:

Yes, the Dean of Student Affairs is the authorised person to approve plans, budgets, programmes and everything that is managed in the activity.

While Int-18-C added:

All the decisions related to PR and publicity, marketing events, advertising and direct marketing must be managed as per the assigned budget for the PR department, so we have a specific budget for each activity.

It was also identified that the public sector university marketing activities require approval from the deanship of student affairs, which due to the hierarchical culture tends to be delayed or controlled for the event, while follow-up requests are ignored, which could thus lead to a lengthy process due to the hierarchical structure, and could affect the budgetary control for different activities, because all activities are based on one person's approval. This nature of budget approval could thus be the result of controlled, hierarchical processes of budgetary rule-enforcement, which eventually stagnate marketing communications activities in public universities:

When we come to the implementation of the programme, before starting it, we submit a detailed plan of the programme and how much the cost of each item is in the budget request form to the responsible authority in the Deanship of Students Affairs, and they review the amount and issue it to us. (Int-20-D)

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the budget flexibility in the private and public universities.

7.3.3.3 Summary of analysis

The above analysis demonstrates that the PR departments in the private universities establish a flexible and annual budget approval process from the start of the year for marketing communications activities, which drives a results-oriented and task-completion culture of the competing values framework. Therefore, on the basis of that budget, the marketing communication channels, time and activities are determined to attain the required marketing objectives that meet the organisational goals, business performance and productivity, which agrees with the competing values framework. Consequently, the marketing communications activities need to be more concise and effective because they are in the hands of one specialised department. On the other hand, it was found that the public sector budget is more controlled due to the hierarchical culture of budget approval, as described by the cultural web model, and hence this follows rule-enforcement and stability guidance rather than productivity according to the competing values framework. However, the budgetary approval is required for each event, which eventually moderates the staff's ability to drive competitiveness due to the budgetary controls and favours the structure and control of the competing values framework, which impacts on the quality of decision-making for different events. Additionally, when there are sequences of events required throughout the year, any delay or budgetary issues in one event can have an impact on the remaining events.

7.4 Selection of media

Main theme 3: Selection of media

The selection of media involves identifying appropriate media, examining reasons to select a particular media, comparison of that media with alternatives, assessing the total cost and expected benefits, developing a media-mix strategy, and scheduling. While marketing communications have shifted from traditional media channels to digital media channels (e.g., e-marketing, digital media and social networking applications), the use of digital media remains based on the organisational resources, capacity, the media objectives, the nature of the communication and the target

audiences. Although digital media has greater reach and impact, the traditional media cannot be completely ignored. Moreover, it was found that the selection of media is different in public and private universities in the KSA. Hence, this study analysed the selection of media with respect to two aspects: capacity and resources, and the media objectives. In terms of the capacity and resources, the current study gathered interview responses with respect to the capacity, ability and use of resources by the PR departments of both the public and private universities in the context of their target populations. Meanwhile, the interview responses regarding the media objectives evaluated the reach and impact of specific media channels with respect to access to customers, promotion, competition, and to maximise the reputation of the educational courses among the target population.

7.4.1 Capacity and resources

Sub-theme 1: Capacity and resources, and their links with IMC strategies

The first sub-theme highlights how capacity and resources can impact media selection for marketing communications strategies in both public and private universities in the KSA. The following section explores the selection of media in terms of the capacity and resources in the private universities.

7.4.1.1 Private universities

It was found that the private universities have an events team that conducts on-campus knowledge-exchange sessions to share information and address the queries of future students, by involving industry leaders and successful business personalities who have taken educational courses at the university in question. It was found that the PR departments of the private universities are more competitive in hiring and deploying experts in these event teams, as well as capturing these events through pictures, audio and video. While Private University A offers overseas training opportunities for staff, Private University B tends to adopt local training sessions, but accepts online international training for staff as a means of cost-saving while achieving considerable career growth in line with the application of digital technologies. These recordings of social events increase the number of likes, views, tags, shares, comments and followings of private universities on social media platforms, which links back to their digital experts' capacity and resources. The inclusion of internal and

external professionals has created more user-generated content, as well as student engagement in continuously improving the educational services:

Currently we have an events team which is inviting future students to campuses with the purpose of delivering information about educational courses. The events team also tries to use successful event pictures, audio and videos, and uploads these on social networking platforms for consumer engagement on social media. (Int-35-B)

We have skilful human capital that is working as a team of social and digital media experts who are always targeting future students and answering their enquiries through social networking platforms. (Int-17-A)

The next section considers the capacity and resources in the public universities.

7.4.1.2 Public universities

Table 7.3 summarises substantial evidence from the previous themes that shows the public sector universities focus more on necessary communications rather than building their brand image. At the same time, they are full of capacity, with three different departments to deal with marketing communications activities. It can be asserted that public sector universities have a good reputational brand image in the market that links back to the state ownership of this type of university. It was found from the interview participants that the PR departments of the public universities are under pressure due to a lack of required experts. For example, they have a smaller number of digital experts to carry out social media marketing, and so they outsource their task to agencies. Moreover, the majority of the trainings in the public universities are arranged internally among staff.

Table 7-3: Summary of the selection of media analysis

Communications departments of public universities	
Different departments' role in marketing	Responsibility
Student affairs	Student activities for current, graduate and incoming students
PR department and media	Responsible for internal and external communications
Faculty of community service	Free awareness and guidance for community programmes
Communications departments of private universities	
Different departments' role in marketing	Responsibility
PR department faculty	Student affairs and events
	Traditional and digital marketing
	Any community events

The recording and sharing of social events on social media for brand engagement is rare for public universities, due to their greater focus on service delivery and quality as opposed to differentiation from private universities. It was identified that the PR departments are fully responsible for all types of communication, with the student affairs department simply responsible for student events, while the community services deal with community awareness. Therefore, the student affairs department contacts the PR department to address event communication with the target student populations. It was thus established that the PR departments of the public sector universities face capacity and resource issues, as evidenced through the interviews:

The public relations department has been under great pressure because the student affairs department just deals with student events. It covers all the responsibilities such as community events, services, occasions and participations. The workload has been overwhelming. (Int-5-D)

Because of a limited PR budget capacity is limited, as we cannot hire the skilled professionals who can design the graphics, audio, video and content for social media platforms. (Int-31-D)

It was found that Public University D outsources its social media communications activities such as market research, with Int-5-D mentioning that on the basis of the customer reviews on social media, they decide on the use of different channels for

their future marketing communications. When Int-18-C was asked whether resources are one of the major reasons for the lack of social media use by public sector universities, the prioritisation of resources was cited, rather than a lack of resources:

We have enough resources as a public sector university, so we use our whole budget for our students, like we also offer some professional additional free courses to our students while they are enrolled on their bachelor's or master's degree.

While Int-22-C explained the benefits of the outsourcing company they engage with:

There is a company that reviews weekly and monthly reports covering all the university's accounts, such as positive and negative news, the top and the weakest tweets, number of followers and increases, which gives us an idea about the potential of different social media channels.

Finally, the section below presents a summary of the analysis of the capacity and resources in the private and public universities.

7.4.1.3 Summary of analysis

Table 7-4 below presents the range of media factors practised by the public and private universities. Arising from the market-driven culture in the private universities, which enables faster budget approvals in areas of digital media communications, it can be seen that the private universities have a significant presence on social media platforms as part of their efforts to apply information technology according to the 4-stage model in marketing communications. On the other hand, the public universities utilise the technology for basic information-sharing rather than innovative engagement and social connections.

Table 7-4: Selection of media factors in public and private universities

Selection factors	Private university selection factors	Public university selection factors
Budget	✓	✓
Content generation and brand-building	✓	
Two-way communication	✓	
Integration of traditional and digital media	✓	✓
Respond to questions from the target population	✓	
Research	✓	✓
Necessary communications	✓	✓
Limited media options based on the objective of communication		✓
Shortage of skills		✓

In the private universities, the purpose of PR events is to gain dual advantages; for example, the direct advantage of PR for events involving local or international trainings, in line with the application of digital technologies for the 4-stage model, and the additional sharing of events on social media (a common practice) to generate creative content and brand engagement. The in-house PR experts have greater involvement in generating sponsored adverts and other promotions, with the purposes of creating interactive communication and improving educational services. On the other hand, the public sector universities are under government ownership, which provides sufficient resource opportunities. Additionally, the government mandate represents a respected brand image in the market, and therefore public universities focus less on brand-building communications. This evidence of cultural linkages to the manner in which private and public universities utilise their structure and resources to implement IMC, thus pushing the boundaries of the KSA national culture, represents new insight into the IMC practices among the public and private institutions in the KSA.

7.4.2 Media objectives

Sub-theme 2: Media objectives and their connection with IMC strategies

The second theme, involving media objectives and their connection with IMC strategies, emerged from the interview responses with respect to media objectives and their connection with advertisements, awareness, PR and sales promotions for both public and private universities. The following section explores the selection of media in terms of the media objectives in the private universities.

7.4.2.1 Private universities

It was found that the extensive use of e-marketing, digital media channels and social networking platforms is designed to attract and maximise the student engagement, with the purpose of increasing the market size beyond the geographical boundaries. The use of media by Private University A has increased investor interest in the market share, while in Private University B the interest has been from national and international students who can engage in educational courses through e-learning systems. These media channels have the capacity to specifically target a larger audience who can afford premium fees for high-value courses as compared to public universities C and D. The spending on advertisements, PR and sales promotions is high because the private universities hire faculty members who command a higher salary; therefore, the focus of private universities is targeting high fees and brand-building. Furthermore, the use of media has created increased capacity for service co-creation. The engagement of students, faculty members and PR departments is higher due to the social media platforms. Moreover, the input of students regarding course content and the overall educational services help to improve service quality.

It was found that media selection in the private sector is based on the potential of different social media channels to attract a greater number of customers and investors, with private sector universities targeting both customers and investors through brand-building in the market:

The use of social and digital media has engaged the maximum number of investors and students nationally and internationally. These media have disseminated information to a larger audience and improved the educational courses as per their feedback and queries. (Int-9-A)

Social media channels play a very important role for brand-building as well as maximising communication to attract and maximise the number of students. (Int-21-A)

There is evidence that remaining successful in the competitive market is another objective of the marketing communications of the private universities, although the budget, objective of communications and the nature of the competition also impact on the selection of the media:

The social media communication channels are helpful for positioning in competitive environment. (Int-11-A)

Now we focus more on Instagram and Snapchat, but in the last five years we did not focus on Snapchat. Snapchat is becoming more and more popular. With new things in Instagram and new features, we have to choose within the budget, objective and nature of the competition ... Doing promotion in Saudi Arabia, we review the prices. For example, if the budget on Instagram exceeds the limits, we have to reduce the budget by targeting people inside Saudi Arabia. (Int-29-B)

The researcher also sought to explore the major objectives of the marketing communications, with the interview responses also highlighting that the private sector universities are focusing on two-way communication to obtain their customers' perspectives, as indicated by Int-32-B when discussing marketing communication:

The main objective of marketing communications at the university is to publish the university's activities on social media. Of course, our main objective is to answer more students and represent the university in the best way to stay competitive in the market.

The interviews also explored why different social media channels such as Twitter and Snapchat are employed by the different universities:

OK! Of course, we use everything. We use Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and all social media platforms. We also have a YouTube channel ... we also put effort into our website. Anyone can visit the website, but we also have a system to target our website visitors, we send an email to attract them to our university. (Int-36-A)

We also offer online live chat to answer our customers whenever they have any questions in mind. (Int-35-B)

The use of online chat rooms and other contact spaces has provided an avenue for the tactical coordination of marketing activities. It was identified that the private universities are more aggressive in attracting customers, and improving two-way

communication through social media feedback and online chat facilities, while also using traditional media to connect with customers:

We continuously use traditional media like magazines and newspapers to put in our customers' minds that we are here. Also, we always use social media to get closer to our audience, which helps us to get more followers. (Int-8-B)

However, nuances exist, even among the two private universities under study. For example, while Private University A has rich mobile apps and online digital marketing presentations (Int-11-A), which are used to advertise their events publicly, there was limited evidence from Int-8-B to ascertain the level of utilising digital online technologies for the same purpose. This can be further analysed using the publicly available data from the websites of the two private universities, whereby Private University A (opened in 1999) utilises seven active social media accounts including Twitter (since 2011) with 18,400 followers, Instagram with 24,800 followers, LinkedIn with 19,423 followers, and TikTok with 1,375 followers and 10,900 likes, as well as a YouTube channel, Snapchat, and Facebook. This compares to Private University B (opened in 2001) with comparatively less social media activity in marketing communications, having 12,603 followers on LinkedIn and 7,011 on Instagram, in addition to using a YouTube channel and WhatsApp, although in terms of Twitter the university has a substantial 46,000 followers. This indicates that although there are differences among the private universities in the use of social media (see Figure 7.6), this could be due to the organisational characteristics among the private universities.

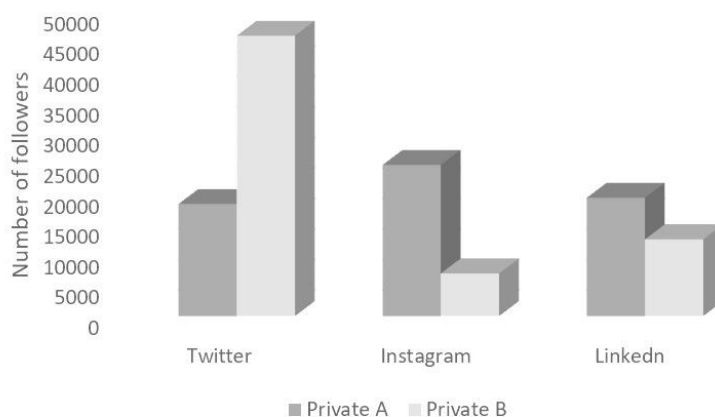


Figure 7-6: Social media characteristics among the two private universities

While it is common practice for universities to deploy marketing strategies using social media in the KSA, such practices have grown significantly over recent years due to the major transformation of the Saudi economy away from oil, as exemplified in the digital media usage among the private universities. The next section considers the media objectives in the public universities.

7.4.2.2 Public universities

It was found that the selection, use and objectives for media are different in the public sector universities. For example, media is usually employed to inform citizens about the value of education, reflecting the perception that it is the social responsibility of the public sector to inform the target population. The media objective of public universities is to fulfil their public responsibility to share relevant information for the stakeholders. The major objective for the selection of social media is to disseminate the required information quickly:

We use communication specifically through social media because it reaches the public faster, especially Twitter and Snapchat, for instruction and required information. (Int-5-D)

Unfortunately, the younger generation does not like to visit the website, so we sometimes have to be brief on social media and attach the link for the website to the press news or the press briefing in the tweet or, for example, a tag to urge the audience to visit the website. (Int-23-C)

The selection of the social media for communication in the public sector is based on the effectiveness of one-way communication to reach the audience, rather than to collect customer data from the social media. The public sector universities use traditional media to provide necessary information for the target population, and only the most popular social media channels are integrated into their activities:

Yes, the most interactive way is through these platforms. We advertise in the newspapers, on the website of the university, on Instagram, on Snapchat and on Twitter, but Twitter then Snapchat are the most popular because many people use them. (Int-14-D)

Due to the extensive use of digital marketing activities in tandem with traditional media, private universities maintain a competitive position, improving service quality as well as maximising service benefits to a larger population compared to the public universities. The private universities are more focused on two-way communication

through a maximum number of social media channels and responding to questions through the live chat on their websites. Additionally, the private universities are aggressive in seeking to attract the maximum number of customers; for example, they contact website visitors through promotional emails.

The use of e-marketing, digital media channels and social networking platforms in the private sector has enhanced the dissemination of information to build their brand image. They also focus on necessary communication, but they have strong integration between required communication and brand-building communication. It was found that the private universities have clear media objectives in the two types of communication that would attract customers, experts and investors. Two-way communication's integration into traditional and digital communication creates student reviews, suggestions, recommendations, sharing and the exchange of content, which is a strategic means for private universities to remain competitive. Therefore, it can be stated that the media selection of the private sector universities also allows them to be more competitive in their marketing communications activities. Meanwhile, the public sector universities are more accountable for the appropriate use of budgets because they are based on public funds, and therefore they give consideration to the objective of communication with the provided resources. For example, Public University D uses Twitter and Snapchat among its social media communication channels because most of the younger generation use these social media platforms in the KSA, and therefore through this approach the university can reach greater numbers of the target audience. This means that the selection of these channels is based on covering the maximum number of people, rather than on creating aggressive marketing communication through multiple social media channels. The following section concludes this chapter with a summary of the data analysis and findings presented in this study.

7.5 Chapter summary

Among the three main themes explored in this chapter—organisational characteristics, organisational flexibility and selection of media—in terms of organisational characteristics, the private universities indicated a controlled internal process for marketing communication, hiring and operations, except where the tactical coordination of marketing strategies with external parties is required. This provided further links to the market culture operated in the private universities according to the

competing values framework, with a significant dilution of the KSA's national culture of power distance, characterised by the market structure rather than the hierarchical structured culture in public universities. This further highlighted the extent to which digital marketing tools are controlled by the private universities through all the social media platforms, compared to the negligible social media presence observed in the public universities, as part of the application of information technology of the 4-stage model.

Organisational flexibility revealed the presence of diverse and integrated female workers and leadership in the private sector universities from different nationalities, albeit primarily developed countries. This is an indication that the masculinity and femininity is based on the Hofstede model, as part of the private universities' efforts to drive innovation and support a structure that contains the vital functions of IMC in the private sector. Conversely, limited female leadership and nationalities were observed in the public universities due to the power distance causing the long-term contracting of Saudi nationals, and therefore stable functions based on the competing values framework, while limiting the potential for new skills to be introduced into the PR departments. Media selection was seen to differ between the public and private universities, as per the high and low context from the work of Hall. The private universities were more closely aligned with the use of high digital technologies and coding similar to the low-context culture of communication, employing many social media platforms and other digital in-house codes of communication. However, the public universities utilised generic relationship-linked communications, which is associated with the high-context culture.

A number of findings emerged from this study's exploration of three main themes: (i) organisational characteristics, whereby the limited power and control links to hierarchical culture in public universities, while the market culture leads to improved control and power among private universities; (ii) organisational flexibility, with the power distance and uncertainty avoidance culture leading to male-dominated Saudi nationals within the public sector universities, while the private sector has more diverse staff gender and nationalities, and greater budget flexibility to implement marketing communication activities; and (iii) the selection of media, which provides the active engagement of technology in the private sector through social media events as part of the marketing communication compared to the public universities with their somewhat

elementary utilisation of social media technology within their marketing communications.

In the next chapter, a discussion of the findings is carried out, in conjunction with the literature reviewed in chapters 2–5.

Chapter 8

Discussion of Findings

8.1 Introduction

The aim of the current study is to understand the influence of Saudi national culture on organisational culture among public and private universities in implementing IMC strategies, for which the study adopted a qualitative approach as a means of gathering rich data within the case-study contexts (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017). There is little known implementation of IMC among HE settings apart from sports events (Turner, 2017), especially in the KSA that features a high index of national culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). This study thus provides fresh insight into the influence of national culture on two public and two private universities, in terms of their organisational culture while implementing marketing communications.

The findings from this study, as presented in Chapter 7, identify various elements of organisational behaviour, which reveal how the control and power of marketing communications staff in those institutions influence the implementation of their activities, thus illustrating the impact of power distance (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Issa et al., 2021) and the wider distinction between private and public institutions. While the organisational structure of the institutions appeared similar to those proposed by the competing values framework (Yarbrough et al., 2011; Porcu et al., 2020), there seems to be a high-context culture among the public universities, and a low-context culture in the private universities, with the private universities more aligned to a market structure while the public universities operate a hierarchical structure. This classification was well linked to their approach in achieving the organisational objectives. The findings provide further understanding of the organisational leadership and gender segregation of the four institutions, highlighting the general male dominance in the public institutions, and illustrating the gender imbalance nature of leadership in the KSA (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Issa et al., 2021). However, this trend was reversed in the private universities that feature leadership positions and marketing communications activities involving both genders, thus representing a deviation from the typical KSA national

culture (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007). In the selection of media, the findings reveal that the private universities have embraced digital technologies and social media in their marketing communications, which are often conducted internally or externally sourced for certain cases, while the public universities adopt basic communications strategies employing few social media platforms. Improved integration of the rituals and routines is better understood by the private universities than the public universities, whereby the former continue to increase student recruitment, community engagement and diverse blends of students, compared to the virtually exclusive all-Saudi-student nature of the public universities' rituals and routines. The next section presents a thematic discussion of the findings presented in the previous chapter.

8.2 Thematic discussion from this study

This section highlights the major and sub-themes explored in this study, to provide a coherent discussion. Figure 8-1 provides a summary of the theme discussion structure.

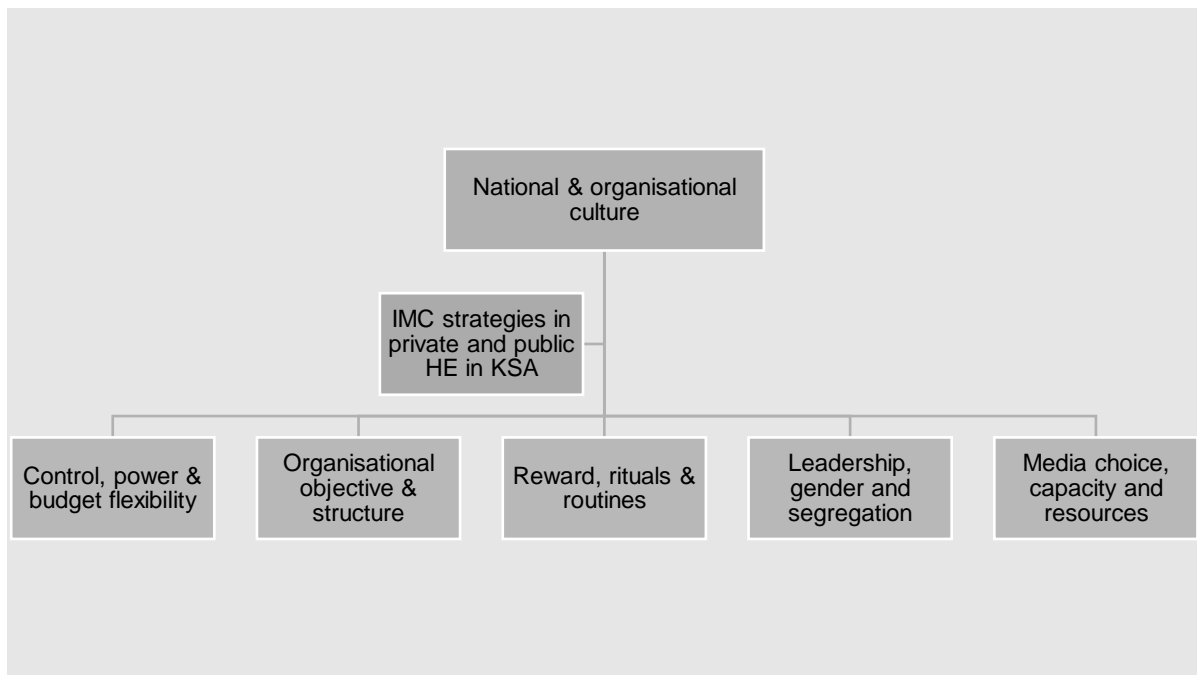


Figure 8-1: Thematic discussion structure

The following section discusses the findings emerging in terms of control and power (organisational characteristics: sub-theme 1) and budget flexibility (organisational flexibility: sub-theme 3).

8.2.1 Control, power and budget flexibility in implementing IMC

In terms of the organisational culture influenced by the national culture in the KSA, the impact on the organisational characteristics (control, power and budget flexibility) was studied to further understand their role in marketing communications within the context of public and private HEIs in the KSA. The major finding from this study is how the decision-making differs among the institutions, with the PR staff of the private universities exercising greater power to organise, get approval and implement marketing communications events compared to the public universities due to the presence of a controlled budgetary structure that hinders the exercising of such power by the PR staff in the public universities. The following section considers control and power specifically.

8.2.1.1 Control and power

While relevant studies have reported the extent to which a collaborating culture is more suitable than a controlling culture among organisations implementing IMC (Porcu et al., 2020), this study shares similar trends but in a diverging view, whereby the private universities adopt a less controlling culture in the KSA, giving rise to the power to execute IMC projects to a greater extent than in the same contexts in the public universities. This trend can be seen in Figure 8-2, which suggests the widespread use of control and limited power in public universities in the KSA, in contrast to the private universities, and underscores the high-power distance in the KSA (Issa et al., 2021). The learning processes by organisations tend to shape or reduce such organisational control, thereby leading to improved performance as part of organisational change (McGuinness and Morgan, 2005), which again suggests the dilution in such national culture, as observed in Private University B having a less controlling structure than Private University A, due to the former institution's increased market-driven culture according to the competing values framework.

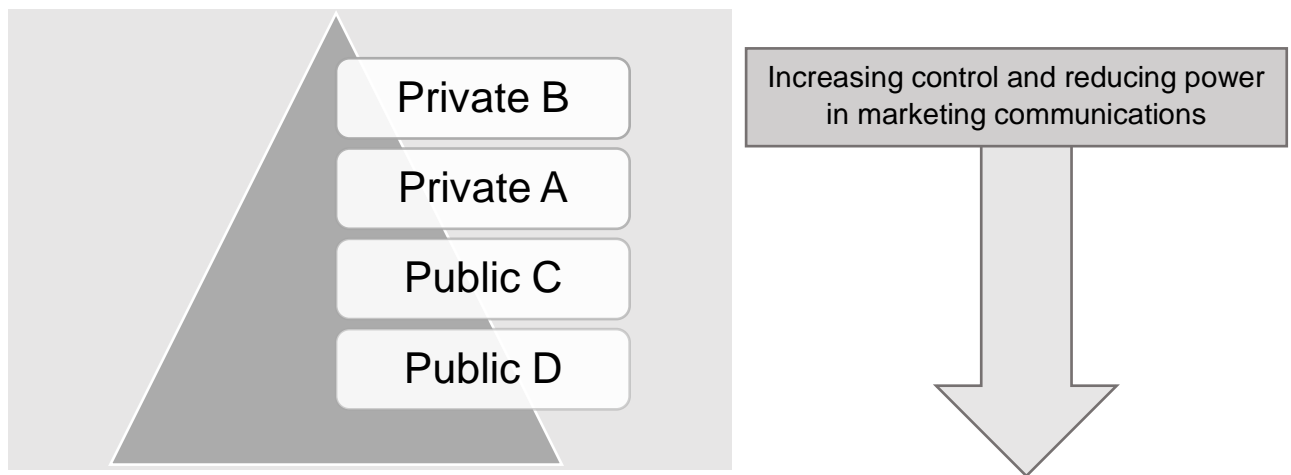


Figure 8-2: Control and power

While control plays an important role in the organisational processes, power has equally been labelled as a strategic factor that can provide energy to effect strategic action (Hardy, 1996; Merlo, 2011). In this context, the findings indicate the gradual empowerment of the marketing team with appropriate decision-making power for marketing communications in the private universities, in contrast to the public universities, which seems to support the strategies of marketing communications implementation, thereby leading to growth in student numbers from inside and outside the KSA.

Previous study has linked power to force (Hardy, 1996), which in this context enables the PR staff to drive key innovative marketing communications that have been linked to brand identity (Foroudi et al., 2017). However, such trends are limited to the private universities due to their ability to expedite the approval process through the less controlling structure that leads to increased output compared to the public sector universities in the KSA. This is in line with Merlo (2011) who relates power to control and influence, which can be seen in this context of budgetary control as the main factor that tends to restrict the organisational marketing communications in public universities.

Comparing these findings with the IMC practices among UK universities, which tend to showcase brand-related marketing information such as the quality of teaching staff, research facilities and the degrees offered (Foroudi et al., 2017), it was found that there is a difference between the UK's and the KSA's marketing communications, even

among the private institutions who have deployed control and power to manage their marketing communications budget more efficiently than the public universities.

The generalisability of this finding could be limited, considering that only two private and two public institutions were analysed. Although the trends suggest that private sector institutions could be more likely to drive organisational culture, learning and capability in organisational improvements compared to the public universities in Egypt (Dajani and Mohamad, 2016), there could be exceptions, even in the KSA, as the highest-ranking public institutions not explored by this study might show different results despite the influence of national culture. According to Hardy and Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998), there are contrasting views among researchers in terms of whether power is exercised as legitimising power through cultural assumptions, controlling decision-making or managing resources. In the current study, this can be seen in almost all cases as power over resources, whereby decisions can be legitimised by national power in countries such as the KSA, although this trend continues to take a new dimension due to the globalisation effect of organisations towards a market-driven culture (Miotto et al., 2020).

In spite of the different dimensions of power reported by Landells and Albrecht (2013), which include positional, personal, informational and connection, the findings from this study highlight the existence of connection power in Public University C, although this could not be established in Public University D, which again can be linked to the high-context cultural nature of the KSA in relation to the work of Hall as part of social orientations (Manrai and Manrai, 1995; Lazar et al., 2020), which tend to allow relationships to outweigh other positions (Kittler et al., 2011). On the other hand, control and power have been linked to responsibility (Merlo, 2011), and hence the private universities in the KSA have a less controlling structure, while indicating the potential for low-context culture in the area of responsibility (Salleh, 2005), whereby the PR staff in Private University A, for example, were found to take responsibility for their marketing errors, which could be used by the management to terminate their contract of employment.

The characteristics of organisational structures tend to dictate approval protocols among organisations (Carnahan et al., 2010; Ots and Nyilasy, 2017), with budget flexibility considered an important aspect of IMC implementation among organisations

(Kliatchko, 2005; Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010). Although the private sector universities were found to have regular and yearly budget approval for marketing communications activities, even at the same level of staff compared to the public universities, such budget constraints continue to hinder planning and the implementation of IMC activities among the public universities in the KSA. Despite the notion that public universities in the KSA are adequately funded to deliver the social role of education to the society (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Issa et al., 2021), according to the 4-stage model budget flexibility has allowed private sector universities increased ability to compete favourably with external and internal audiences of marketing communications. A summary of the findings in terms of budget flexibility is shown in Figure 8-3.

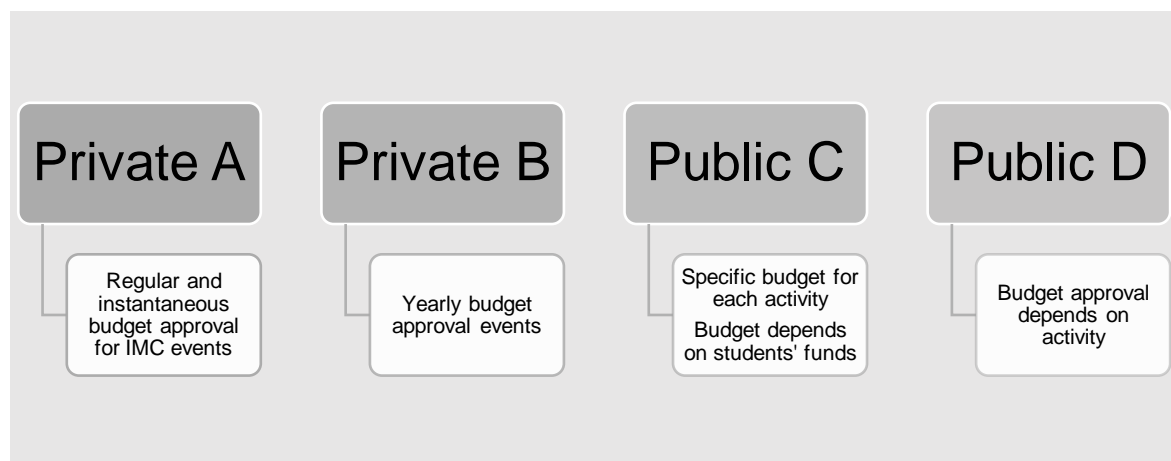


Figure 8-3: Budget flexibility among the KSA's public and private universities

The existence of nuances in the number of marketing communications deployed from the websites and social media accounts has shown the impact that such flexibility in media budget approval could have in reaching out to audiences within and outside the KSA. Although the reliability of the data presented here could be impacted by the qualitative nature of this study, the findings provide new insights into the impact of budget flexibility among organisations (Yarbrough et al., 2011), which will continue to shape future studies in this domain.

The next section discusses the findings emerging in terms of organisational objectives (organisational characteristics: sub-theme 3) and organisational structure (organisational characteristics: sub-theme 2).

8.2.2 Organisational objectives and structure shaped by the national culture

Marketing communication has been identified as a means of improving business performance (Kahn and Mentzer, 1998; Olson et al., 2005), while organisational strategy through objectives can further shape performance (Yarbrough et al., 2011). As part of this study, organisational objectives were explored in relation to marketing communications. While there appears to be specific organisational objectives pursued by each individual university investigated in this study, there are commonalities between all of them, and also between the private–private and public–public universities. The private universities have identified digital technology for the recruitment of both national and international students as part of their organisational objectives, which has led to the comprehensive utilisation of almost all social media platforms for the management of marketing communications, resulting in the presence of many regional and international students in Private University B, and to a lesser extent in Private University A. In comparison, the public universities' objectives are more focused on providing social services for the community rather than seeking profit-driven outcomes (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020).

Following the findings from the current study that the private universities in the KSA have made heavy investment in their PR departments in the areas of digital technologies and human capital as part of their profit-making intentions, they now possess highly qualified individuals who are specialised in their fields, such as a content developer, business development officer, PR officers, and a marketing director.

The analysis of the data collected from the four individual universities suggests a distinctive organisational objective, in which IMC has been employed as an instrument to achieve this. While attempting to utilise IMC to achieve such an objective, most of the institutions are affected by external factors that according to Eagle et al. (2007) cause significant changes to either the IMC implementation strategy or the accountability of such a process.

Having aimed to create a campus atmosphere that constitutes both local and international staff and students, which could improve diversity and lead to a more inclusive academic atmosphere, Private University A was found to have deployed social media platforms for marketing recruitment campaigns as part of its IMC strategy.

This was found to have significantly increased the international students' population by up to 10%, while resulting in a variety of international staff from different continents. However, this specific objective has been externally affected by the university's geography, which has limited transport linkages and industrial hubs compared to other public universities located along industrialised hubs and with superior regional transport links, which tend to create significant competitive forces in the HE domain (Miotto et al., 2020). While this evidence highlights the significance of IMC in achieving organisational objectives, as established in the literature (Porcu et al., 2017; Porcu et al., 2020), it is significant to realise that IMC could be used to dilute the KSA's national culture in the educational system through a diverse campus atmosphere. The summary of the objectives and the role of IMC in achieving such objectives is vital, since the younger generation is highly present on social media, and thus it is imperative to create active marketing communications strategies to engage international and local students on social media. It has also been observed that brand-building increases when organisations elevate their presence on social media (Foroudi et al., 2017), and in the case of the private universities, students appear to be drawn towards those institutions that are actively present on social media platforms. Figure 8-4 summarises the IMC and organisational objectives in terms of this study's institutions, objectives, the role of IMC and the external factors of influence.

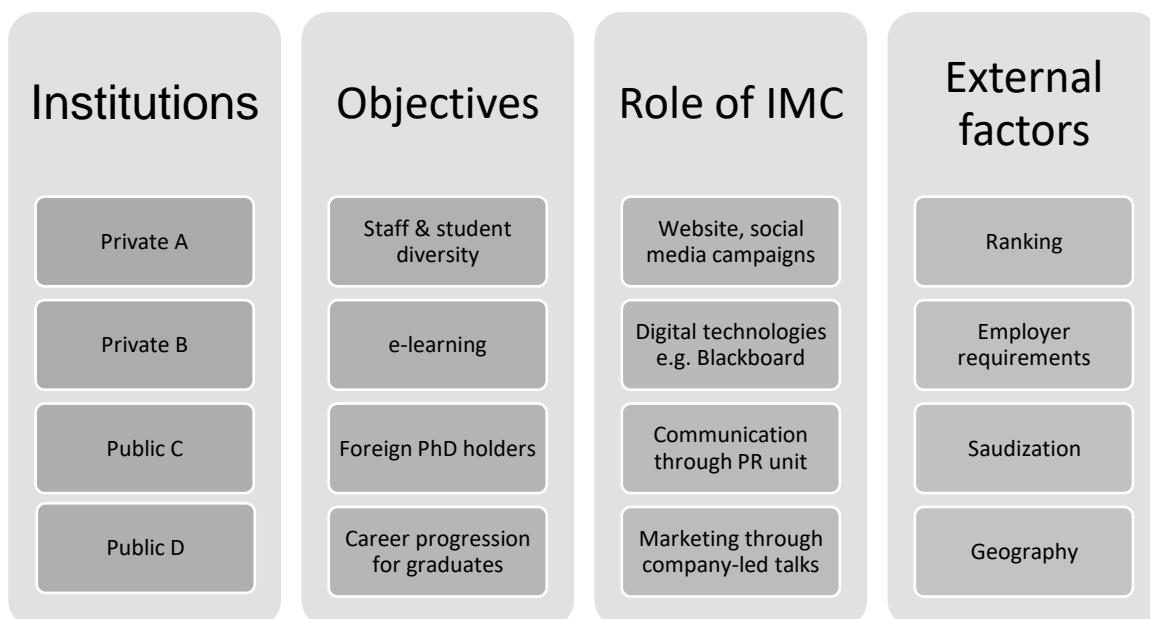


Figure 8-4: IMC and organisational objectives

As seen in Figure 8-4, Private University B has tailored its digital objectives to the delivery of e-learning programmes, which has resulted in improved technological capabilities, further linking with the digital marketing strategies of the university. According to the publicly available data from the website, Private University B intends to explore the vast educational requirements of the working class, who are employed but are willing to continue their flexible education where possible. The financial integration of Blackboard and other digital learning tools as part of the 4-stage model has been adopted, hence enabling distance-learning delivery. This impressive IMC-driven objective has provided a new medium for learning in the KSA, where e-learning is uncommon. Despite the considerable success in this objective, it was found that employers continue to resist this paradigm shift that could see many employed staff achieve their degrees, which is typical of the KSA's national culture of uncertainty avoidance, due to the threat that either the staff will leave after graduation, or their studies will interfere with their current professional responsibilities (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). These findings are similar to those reporting that technological capacity enables the organisation to enhance its performance (Foroudi et al., 2017; Porcu et al., 2017). Although the literature provides an understanding of the impact of organisational objectives on organisational communications (Porcu et al., 2012; Podnar and Balmer, 2021), the findings in this study are focused on understanding how IMC could be used to shape organisational objectives among public and private universities in the HE sector. This is because public sector organisations communicate with the public as required by the public or the organisation itself, while private marketing communications are intended to contribute to profit generation for the organisation (Eagle et al., 2007; Foroudi et al., 2017; Porcu et al., 2017).

Public University D has established an objective to improve the career progression of its graduates through the PR department's strategy of working closely with industry to provide career seminars for students, thereby shaping their skill sets on the expectations of employers. Although this can be seen as both organisational learning (Xiong and King, 2019) and growth through organisational culture (Berthon et al., 2001), which could both be achieved through IMC (Foroudi et al., 2017; Porcu et al., 2017), it highlights a significant role of the 4-stage model in achieving the organisational objectives through IMC. Nevertheless, one key external constraint is the geography of Public University D, being located in a less industrialised and

transportation-connected area, which employees tend to consider as difficult to visit when compared to other institutions in the KSA. This can be a cause of a lack of generalisability in the findings of this study, in that deploying IMC to achieve career improvement for graduates will always occur for all universities, considering that other external factors could outweigh the benefits of IMC in achieving such an objective.

On the other hand, this study finds that public universities in the KSA also set their objectives, and often utilise IMC as an instrument for implementation. For example, Public University C has set the objective of attracting high-quality PhD graduates located internationally but of Saudi origin, which is in line with the Saudization policy that promotes the recruitment of KSA citizens (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). This policy was identified to have a strong national culture inclination, as most Saudi citizens work in public office, in agreement with the culture, while international graduates or labour tend to bring innovation into the system that could help dilute the national culture (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). Public universities also have budgetary constraints, due to which their spending on PR, advertisements, social networking and digital marketing is limited. Therefore, public universities focus on targeted marketing, which usually includes national students but not international markets.

In terms of the organisational structure sub-theme, the findings from this study have provided two distinct structural behaviours of the four institutions, as well as certain nuances and similarities observed. Private universities A and B continue to drive results as part of their efforts to remain competitive, which has characterised their alignment to a market-based organisational structure identified as key for organisational success (Olson et al., 2005). Public universities C and D are well funded by government, operating more as a social service organisation dominated by power distance and the uncertainty avoidance of the KSA's national culture, rendering the public universities into a hierarchical structure based on the competing values framework (see Figure 8-5). On the other hand, this study identifies the driving innovation and coordination of marketing activities that tend to position the private institutions ahead of their public counterparts in marketing communications, which is an important driver of business performance based on the competing values framework (Yarbrough et al., 2011).

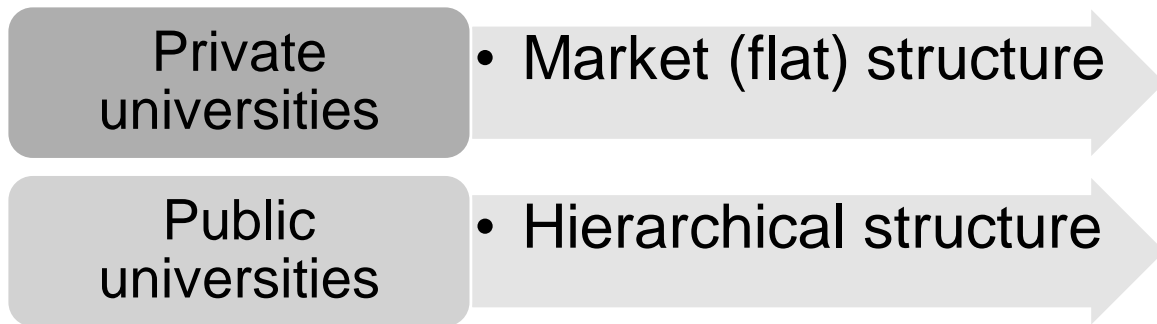


Figure 8-5: Organisational structure type

Emerging from the organisational structures of the private and public universities explored in Chapter 6, some studies have indicated various factors, both internal and external, that affect the organisational structure towards IMC implementation (Porcu et al., 2017), while others have proposed IMC not as a single blueprint, but rather as a set of practices that could be shaped by national, organisational, professional and cultural contingencies (Ots and Nyilasy, 2017). The implications from the findings in this study are that despite the high-ranked national culture in the KSA, private sector universities have adopted a proactive approach of improving the organisational structure through the adoption of market-driven strategies that could help influence the national culture of a hierarchical structure, without enabling cross-organisational communication and inclusivity.

With the organisational structures in the public universities appearing to be high context according to the work of Hall, in terms of the responsibility element of Hall, and aligned to the leaders in the structure taking responsibility for the action of the lower-level PR staff (Wurtz, 2005), this is similar to the culture-based perspectives that signify the role of cultural values and the internal organisational characteristics with key external customers within the span of the KSA's national culture of power distance (Al-Yahya, 2009). While Public University D has shown stronger control than Public University C, it is in line with the characteristics of such organisations that pursue organisational stability according to the competing values framework, rather than the market-driven culture in private universities (Teegarden et al., 2010). Such orientation observed in Public University D, and to a certain extent in Public University C, has been linked positively to IMC compared to market culture (Porcu et al., 2017). Hence, this can be viewed as new emerging insight into comprehending how the HE system

in the KSA adapts to such concepts and applications from the IMC perspective between public and private universities. In general, the organisational objectives and structures identified as part of this study have revealed new insight into their interconnection in KSA universities, especially with the study identifying that objectives and goals dictate decision-making among HE in IMC implementation (Yarbrough et al., 2011). Despite the limited data gathered in this study, which could limit the generalisability of the findings, there is a notion that the public universities adopt a hierarchical structure while the private universities adopt a market structure, as per the competing values framework, in achieving their organisational objectives through IMC. The following section discusses the findings emerging in terms of reward (organisational characteristics: sub-theme 5) and rituals and routines (organisational characteristics: sub-theme 4).

8.2.3 Reward, rituals and routines in IMC

As part of this study, rituals and routines were further analysed due to their relevance in previous studies to understanding the complex nature of everyday organisational life (McDonald and Foster, 2013; Ots and Nyilasy, 2017), which tends to provide further understanding of the organisational culture. Hence, in this regard the study focused on the impact of the KSA's national culture on such organisational rituals and routines, and their corresponding implications to IMC practices within the public and private universities. While common rituals exist among all the universities, which were often observed as celebrating the traditional days including Eid, Ramadan and National Day, it was observed that Private University A has initiated two new rituals—Family Day and Multicultural Day—as part of its efforts to synchronise the relevance of family and the culture of the staff and students with the organisational objectives. Besides being captured by the cultural web model, this also reflects essential cultural elements that improve the organisational settings (McDonald and Foster, 2013), while further validating the relevance of family ties in the KSA, which is regarded as having strong institutions (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016). Although this was specific to Private University A, Private University B also employs an Innovators Day and Invite the Influencers event to encourage the significance of innovation, which Tabarés and Kuittinen (2020) indicate could bridge the gap between academia and manufacturers, and could imply student engagement with industry, thereby influencing the learning of

industrial skills while at the university. Such rituals are organised and managed by the PR departments and have continued to gain the attention of the wider community, which could influence their marketing strategy.

While the routines appear well established among such private universities, certain routines were also identified at different levels of staff. For example, in Private University A, the PR department staff arrange a Coffee Afternoon every month to share ideas on the various challenges of marketing communication at the global, regional and university levels. This was understood to correlate with the three tiers of communication in the work of Hall (Giroux, 2000). For Private University B, routine communication at the university level is termed the Presidential Breakfast, which is considered as a university-wide strategy for reducing the barriers between the leadership and followers in the university. The public universities' websites, and particularly Public University C, indicate social commitment among the PR department staff members due to the social orientation factor, leading staff to communicate and commit to each other at a personal level, and tending to drive commitment even outside normal working hours for the delivery of marketing communications. For example, social media posts were noticed to have been published outside of working hours in Public University C, although there was no such evidence from Public University D, leading to the assumption that the PR staff utilise their bonds to engage outside of normal working hours for the success of Public University C. On the other hand, there was no evidence of social media posting outside of working hours on the websites of private universities A and B, which could be linked to the low-context culture according to the work of Hall.

Another aspect of routine realised from the websites is the nature of confrontation among staff on social media. While this study has been unable to identify any open confrontation among the PR and other staff members on their social media handles for public universities C and D, the staff from Private University B were noticed in an open confrontation on social media due to issues relating to workplace matters. Although the researcher has been unable to establish the true origin of the disagreement, open confrontation is characterised by low-context culture, and often manifests in staff with fewer social bonds in the workplace.

Despite the literature reiterating the relevance of organisational strategic behaviour in achieving organisational performance (Olson et al., 2005; Yarbrough et al., 2011), in agreement with the Hofstede model and its element of power distance in which the KSA scores highly (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016), such routine approaches of private universities A and B are gradually narrowing the leadership communication gap within their organisations, as part of their effort to provide easier communication channels among employees.

It was identified that the financial pressure on private universities compels them to seek innovative approaches for the delivery of education so that they can maintain their competitive position as well as their financial efficiency (Lowrie, 2007; Judson et al., 2008), which tends to allow them to compete within their space through the tactical coordination of marketing activities, as highlighted by the 4-stage model. It has been shown in other streams of work that strategic stability and integration in organisations can be achieved through strategic adjustment, which is influenced by routines (Johnson, 1988; Deshpandé et al., 1993; Racat et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the rituals and routines found in public universities C and D are generally memorial in nature, and include the generic Eid and National Day, as well as open days, which the literature considers routines as part of the organisational memory (Berthon et al., 2001). The literature simply explains the organisational routine's impact on organisational performance, which is linked to the tactical coordination of such routine activities as a component of marketing communication (Porcu et al., 2017), the IMC antecedents for brand identity in the UK (Foroudi et al., 2017), and change in routines as per the organisational structure (Hendry and Seidl, 2003). However, this study is among the first to explain routines and rituals' impact on the development and implementation of the IMC strategies of public and private HEIs within the Gulf region in general, and the KSA in particular. It is evident from the research that there exists a similarity in marketing communications across the two types of universities in terms of traditional days such as National Day, Eid, and other public holidays. Further, there are some similar communications such as announcements concerning open days, updates related to academics and announcements related to student events. The private universities focus on creating content to convey the message that they are serving their stakeholders better than others, so that more students (i.e., customers) can be attracted. However, the

generalisability of this data could be limited due to the small number of universities considered in this qualitative study design. Previous studies have reiterated the relevance of employee, community and customer attributes and routines in shaping the market culture (Zohar, 2012), which could be verified by the routines of community engagement of private universities A and B as part of their marketing strategy. Although nuances exist, even among the manner in which these private universities engage with the community, this differs significantly from the public universities' routines that consider major rituals and routines only as part of their community engagement, such as Eid and National Day.

In the private universities, the reward culture is aimed at attracting and retaining human capital that is exceptionally talented, so that the optimum institutional image can be conveyed. This was further evidenced by their promotion of brand clarity (Judson et al., 2008), and even in their reward systems (Dajani and Mohamad, 2016). The findings from Private University B characterise human development through a generous reward system that drives a market culture of competition, as suggested by the competing values framework. Such reward is also supported by the Presidential Breakfast programme that tends to bring rewards to staff that deliver exemplary actions in achieving the university-wide goals, as shown in Figure 8-6.

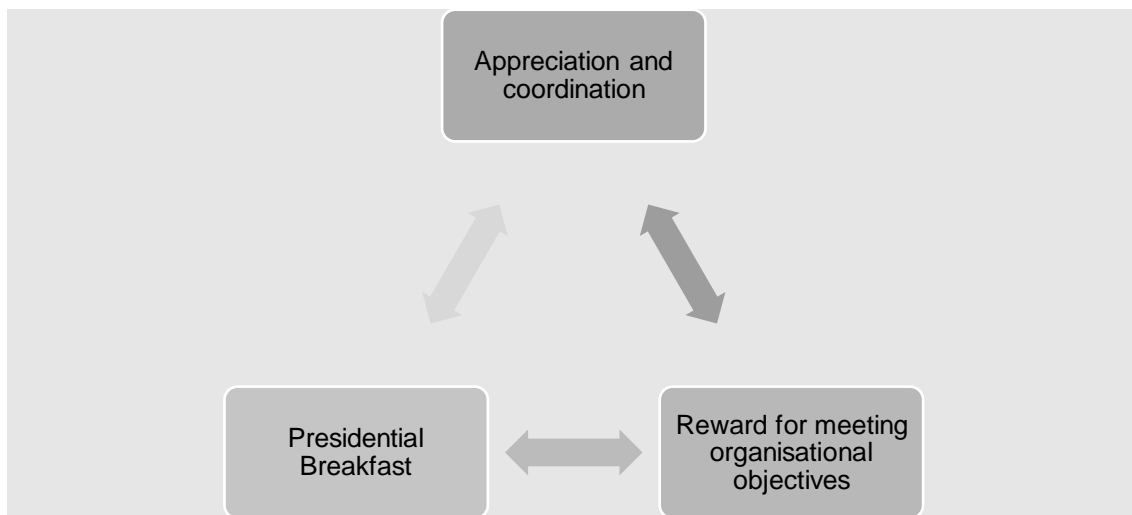


Figure 8-6: Private University B's reward structure

As such, Private University B hires specialised personnel for both their marketing communications and other general teaching and administrative systems. Further, this private university utilises a highly competitive rewards culture to promote competition

among the staff so that greater employee engagement can be achieved. On the same note, Private University A has a similar approach of reward system, as presented in Figure 8-7.

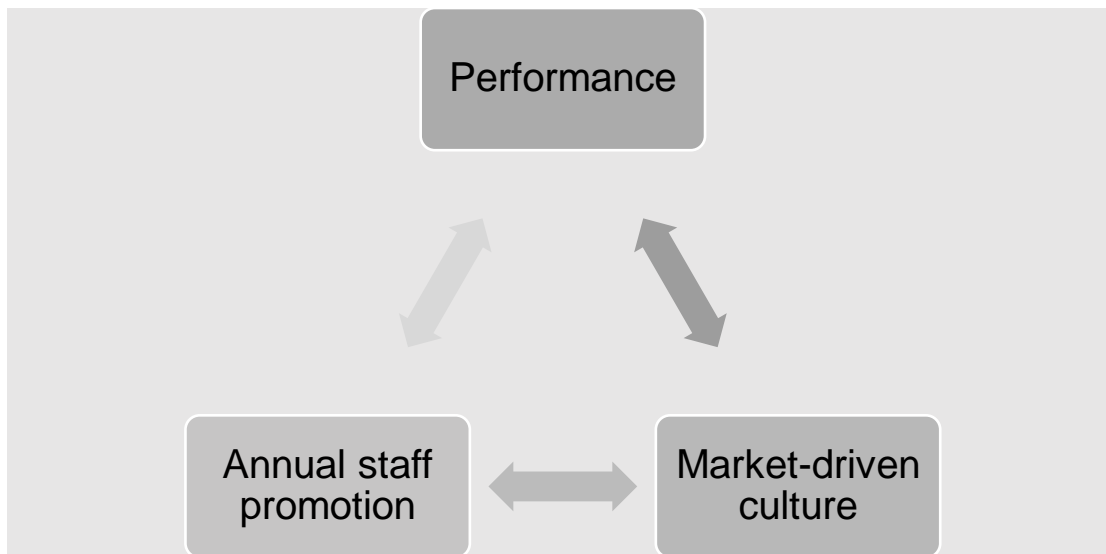


Figure 8-7: Private University A's reward structure

It was identified that the private sector marketing departments are highly motivated because of the high salaries, while the public sector universities' marketing departments are well motivated because of the organisational (government) level of their position and the associated security. Therefore, the private sector marketing department employees are highly motivated to engage with their positions because they have lucrative salary packages and opportunities for professional growth, while the public sector marketing department employees are motivated due to the secure nature of their position and the reduced pressure on the achievement of the organisational objectives. This aligns with the research on self-determination and stronger intrinsic motivation (Horovitz and Mayer, 2021; Lichy and McLeay, 2021), along with higher perceptions about work control (Mortimer and Laurie, 2017). When employees have more meaningful work and see improvements in their responsibilities, their professional identities are noticed to expand. The performance of the staff is improved by this expansion of their professional identity, which motivates them to achieve their organisational objectives. Hence, they perform according to the conditions for self-motivation and improved performance, to collectively achieve the organisational and personal objectives (Tabarés and Kuittinen, 2020; Lichy and

McLeay, 2021). Consequently, the private university marketing departments have the potential to achieve executive level positions and unique skills, which leads them to strive for innovation in their role. Such success stories have also become a source of attraction for a more specialised and highly skilled workforce to seek employment in private universities.

On the other hand, the public universities have a distinctive, stable reward structure, through engaging staff on permanent contracts that provide stability as per the competing values framework's hierarchical structure. This tends to attract larger numbers from the KSA population to work in public university settings, with Figure 8-8 describing the reward system for public universities C and D.

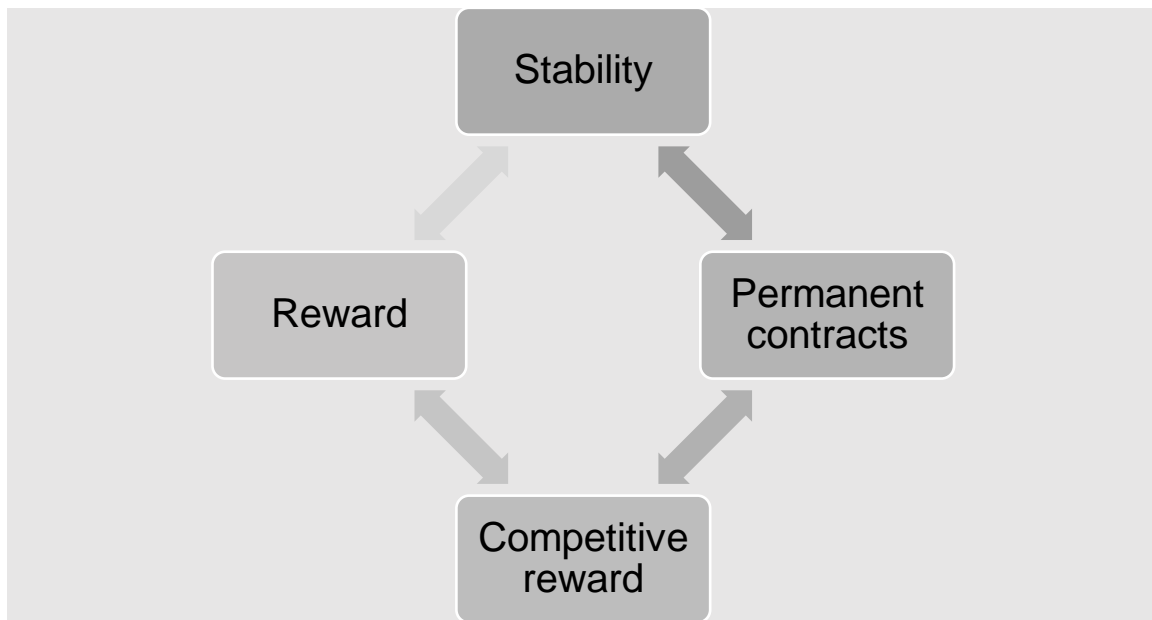


Figure 8-8: The public universities' reward structure

The results reveal that the reward culture in the public universities has shifted from static to competitive over time, which shows a reduced national culture of stability, driven by the competitive market promoted by geographies of innovation, instead of the market share of recruitment proposed by other studies (Hayes, 2007; Dajani and Mohamad, 2016; Al-Thagafi et al., 2020). The increasing demand for new human capital in the industry has resulted in the interlinking of performance and reward. Highly qualified people join the community services, PR and student affairs departments of public universities due to the positive public perceptions of such institutions, and because of the permanency of the roles within them. Recently, more

promotion and reward opportunities have been introduced by public universities so that a culture of employee recognition can be fostered. This has led to improvements in employee participation in disseminating information regarding the university to the public. Individuals aim to improve their personal growth and performance when they work under a competitive reward structure (Hardy, 1996; Al-Thagafi et al., 2020). Evidence from the literature has highlighted the outcomes of such a reward structure, which involve a great desire for superior performance over colleagues, resulting in professional competition between team members (Pagell, 2004).

While reward is considered by some researchers in terms of recognition, remuneration or welfare (Pagell, 2004), this study finds similar trends but with an additional outcome on how the leadership manages the staff member's expectations. Public university reward has been tailored with employment secured for the longer term, as well as the leadership's willingness to take responsibility for staff errors, with this study identifying that such reward could have greater significance for many than merely the expected remuneration system alone.

In the broader UK and US contexts of HE, the marketing communications of public universities include globalisation and academic ranking (Judson et al., 2008; Foroudi et al., 2017), as well as funding options (Miotto et al., 2020). Although such factors are also influential in the KSA's HE, the contrast in the KSA is that public universities are well funded by government, and therefore do not invest heavily for financial gain (Al-Thagafi et al., 2020; Essa and Harvey, 2022), while public universities in other regions could be more prone to funding deficit from the government (Foroudi et al., 2017).

Comparatively, within the Gulf region similar cultures exist among the neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Baranik et al., 2021; Issa et al., 2021), and the reward strategy can be understood in relation to how the universities are funded. As the public universities in the KSA are funded by the government and controlled by the Ministry of Education, it is therefore significant to understand the potential for dictating the reward system, which can be linked to the social orientations' element of the work of Hall (Bernstein et al., 2016; Lazar et al., 2020). This emanates from the relevance of ties and relationship in the social space, rendering the public universities fully accountable to any national policy and culture, which again paves the way for a national culture of power distance in the reward

structure (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). On the other hand, the private universities exercise certain leverage, for example, the contract length rather than a permanent contract reward system, which can be viewed as a low-context culture (Kittler et al., 2011) that leverages such institutions to operate and drive market growth, provided that this is acceptable within the terms of the Ministry of Education.

The subsequent section discusses the findings emerging in terms of gender in leadership (organisational flexibility: within sub-theme 1) and segregation (organisational flexibility: sub-theme 2).

8.2.4 Gender in leadership and segregation in IMC strategies

The organisational flexibility main theme explored those areas of organisations that tend to feature continuous changes in order to adapt to the evolving organisational goals (Theobald et al., 2021), which others consider as part of organisational learning (McGuinness and Morgan, 2005; Lazar et al., 2020), particular for utilising IMC practices to improve performance (Kliatchko, 2008; Porcu et al., 2020). The three sub-themes explored in this section involve leadership, segregation and budget flexibility.

While leadership in the KSA has been widely studied within the context of organisational culture (Bates et al., 1995; Lok and Crawford, 2004; Porcu et al., 2017), and also considered as a vital aspect of IMC implementation (Kerr et al., 2008; Kliatchko, 2008), the KSA has traditionally been dominated by a national culture of a male-dominated leadership style (Dajani and Mohamad, 2016; Mabon et al., 2021; Essa and Harvey, 2022), coupled with a high proportion of Saudi nationals among the public sector workforce, including HE (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). As this study seeks to comprehend the extent to which sub-national culture can influence organisational IMC implementation among public and private universities, the findings have identified a unique trend of diverse nationalities in workplaces for private sector universities and importantly leadership, compared to the male-dominated leadership in public universities, as seen in Figure 8-9.

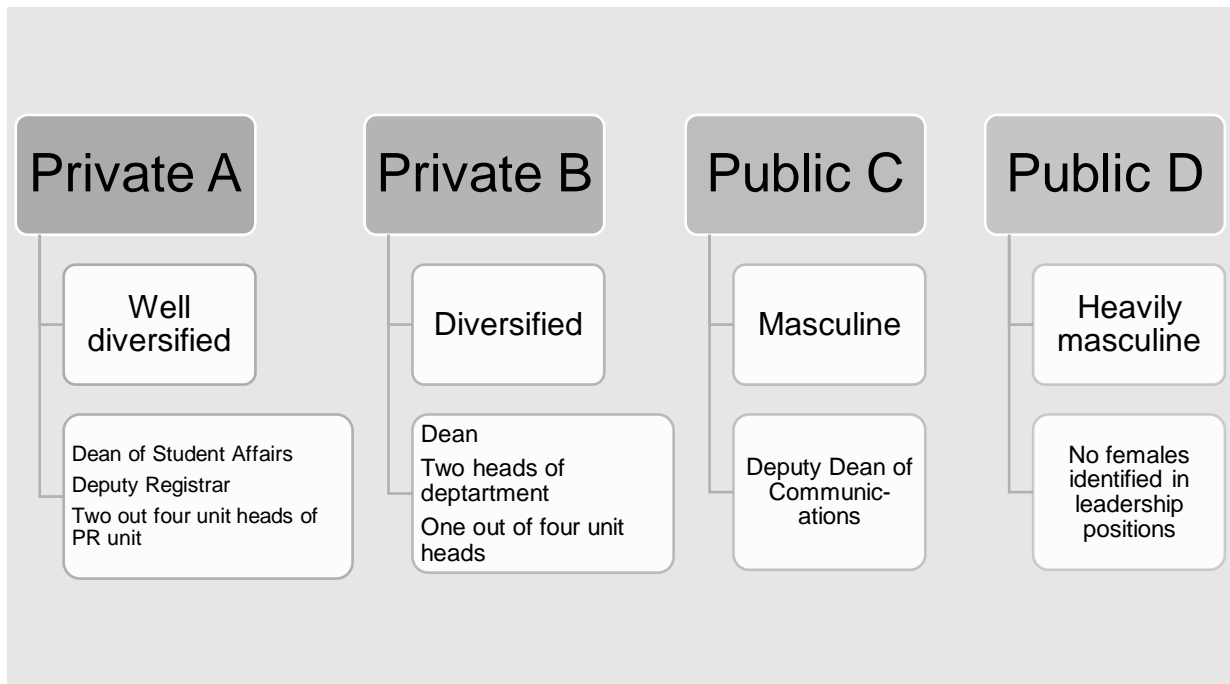


Figure 8-9: Leadership gender in public and private universities in the KSA

The divergence observed in Private University A, for example, of higher leadership up to the dean of school being led by a female (femininity) and also the less diversified Private University B with a female dean and head of department, clearly signifies a new dimension of the KSA's national culture dilution emanating from the private sector universities, which could be linked to their market-driven policies to attract students and staff according to the competing values framework (Porcu et al., 2017). Equally, the nationalities of the employees in the PR and other departments were identified as mixed according to the website of Private University A and the social media handles of the respective staff. Although this finding cannot be generalised due to the limited number of universities considered in this study, there appears to be improved marketing communications promoting the recruitment of other nationalities and female leadership among the KSA's HEIs in recent times, particularly among private universities such as Private University A. This finding has shown a divergent presence of masculinity versus femininity as part of the Hofstede model of national culture in the KSA's HE, which has revealed wider differences in the composition of the leadership, as well as the PR department staff, in line with the Hofstede model (Strauß et al., 2021).

Despite the public universities being still dominated by male leadership (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016), Public University C has filled certain roles (e.g., Deputy Dean) by females, and hence offers new hope of changes in the leadership gender in the public universities of the KSA. Many authors have emphasised the context of leadership within organisations as an important change required to achieve organisational productivity (Porcu et al., 2017), which other models such as the Hofstede model consider as an integral aspect of national culture (Strauß et al., 2021), since the existence of such nuances within the public and private universities is linked to the organisational culture of such institutions. Despite the limited nature of this study based on a qualitative methodology, it represents one of the few studies that have explored the nature and culture of the KSA's national culture among public and private institutions.

Despite the structure of public universities' leadership being more hierarchical, one common practice realised from the websites is that the leadership tends to take responsibility for the errors resulting from their subordinates in Public University C; for example, the academic calendar published on the website by the marketing communications team contained no dates for the Eid holiday, with the Dean of Student Affairs later apologising on behalf of the university and also his social media handle. This characterises a high-context culture whereby social bonds tend to compel leadership to take responsibility for the errors of their subordinates, and is in contrast to Private University C, where the PR staff were noticed sending corrected information via social media and apologies where possible, thereby taking full responsibility for their errors, which is a characteristic of a low-context culture.

It is evident that the business culture experienced in the KSA is primarily hierarchical in nature (Aldossari and Robertson, 2016), which might have led to the notion that in a male-dominated hierarchical structure, staff tend to avoid initiatives for decision-making or engagement (Essa and Harvey, 2022), and rather look upwards to the male-dominated structure for direction.

The available literature has evidenced the continuous engagement of women through gender diversity (Dajani and Mohamad, 2016), with institutions such as Private University A and to a lesser degree Private University B showing gradual gender inclusivity in their operations, particularly in the PR department, as a way of diverting

from the masculinity dominance in the KSA's organisational leadership, as seen in public universities C and D, although Public University C has shown some improvements with evidence of gender inclusion on its website. Regionally within the Gulf states, gender inclusion in leadership is becoming more pronounced in nations such as the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Qatar, among others (Thomas et al., 2020).

Despite the increased gender inclusion among Middle Eastern countries, this study has further corroborated the deepening relevance of gender mixing in the workplace, and how it supports university processes including marketing communications. For example, this study found from the social media handles of the studied universities that the marketing communications messages posted by a team that includes both genders tend to be read and re-tweeted more widely than those posted by a single-gender team. As communication is affected by gender (Kerr et al., 2008), each gender tends to have greater attachment to the messages created by their gender type (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Issa et al., 2021), and hence indicates the tangible benefits of gender inclusion that the private universities have achieved, and the public universities are improving upon, thus representing another key dilution to the KSA's national culture of masculinity dominance.

Workplace diversity has continued to promote the removal of barriers to gender, nationality or race among many organisations driving performance (Porcu et al., 2017), which has led to improved marketing communications involving different genders in the workplace. Despite the KSA's national culture of masculinity, which tends to segregate males and females in the workplace (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016), this study shines a light on how segregation is changing among the KSA's HEIs, with the private universities explored in this study operating a mixed workplace for PR staff dealing with marketing communications, while Private University B also features diverse nationalities in the workplace, as shown in Figure 8-10.

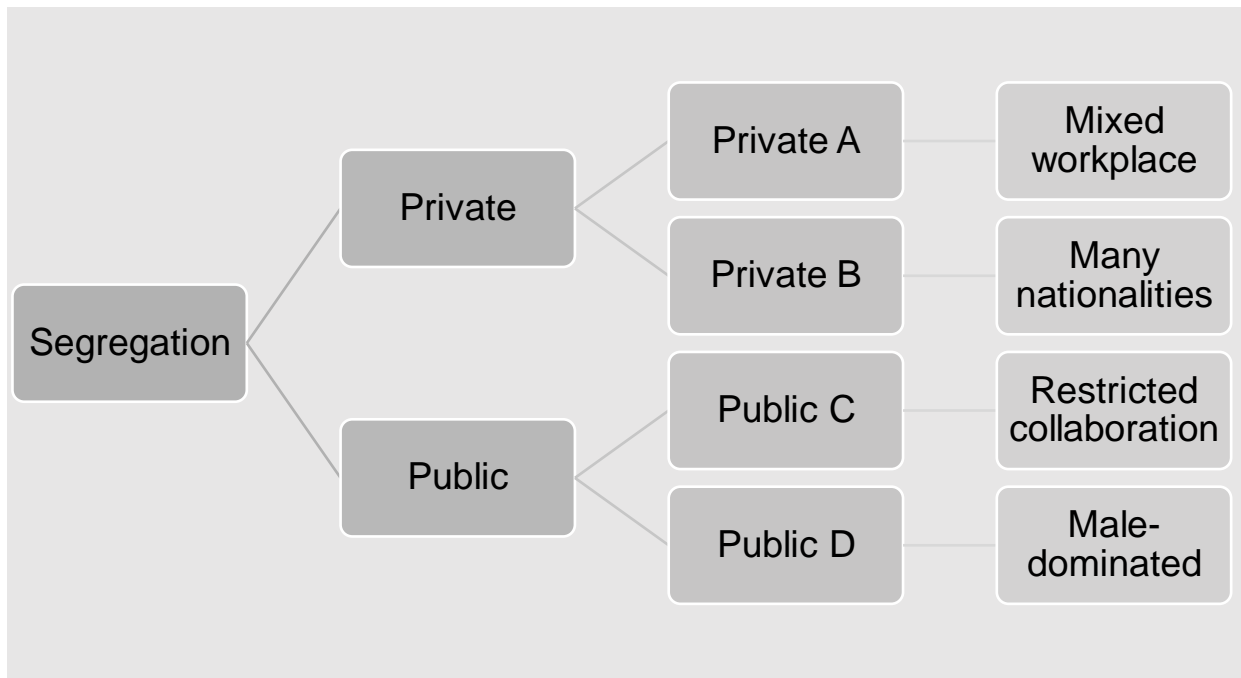


Figure 8-10: Workplace diversity in the KSA’s HEIs

In terms of the public institutions, this study identified a greater dominance of Saudi males in public universities C and D, without other genders or nationalities in the PR department, while private universities such as Private University B feature a number of other nationalities from Europe, the US, Africa and Asia based on information from the staff profiles on their websites. Private University A was found to have mixed-gender workplaces consisting of both genders, whereby the aspects of mixed nationalities and reduced segregation are a deviation from the KSA’s national culture, thereby driving change to both marketing communication and market-driven workplaces that promotes staff independence. Meanwhile, it was not possible to find such information on public universities C and D’s websites. IMC implementation enjoys greater success where diverse staff send messages to diverse audiences (Turner, 2017), which tends to provide an avenue for attracting skills and students to such universities.

Despite the complications surrounding culture and religion in the KSA (Tlaiss and Kauser, 2011; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016), the segregation of males and females within some places of work constitutes an essential part of the KSA culture, although the findings from this study have seen this cultural setting fading gradually in the private sector, while still actively practised within the public domain including HE (Al-Gahtani et al., 2007; Abalkhail and Allan, 2016; Aldossari and Robertson, 2016). One

paradigm shift that has recently evolved in the KSA is the opening of access for females to attend football matches and cinemas (Mabon et al., 2021; Essa and Harvey, 2022), which is perceived as a major diversion from the national culture of segregation. This could signpost a shift in the public sector universities, including those covered in this study, to gradually introduce more females into their marketing communications roles, whose presence is either very limited or non-existent at present.

The next section discusses the findings emerging in terms of media choice (selection of media: within sub-theme 2) and capacity and resources (selection of media: sub-theme 1).

8.2.5 Role of media choice, capacity and resources shaping IMC strategies

Media has been considered a vital tool for exchanging information and communication (Judson et al., 2008; Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010; Foroudi et al., 2017), with contemporary technologies providing several options including social media, which has gained significant attention in IMC (Kliatchko, 2008; Foroudi et al., 2017; Turner, 2017). This theme explores two main sub-themes: capacity and resources, and the choice of media.

Training and capacity improvement has been a key aspect of staff development in many organisations (Wilson, 2001; Porcu et al., 2020; Lichy and McLeay, 2021), which can equally be utilised to achieve IMC strategies (Kerr et al., 2008; Turner, 2017; Porcu et al., 2020). This study reveals that skill-set development and resources have certain nuances among the KSA's private and public institutions, although similarities were also identified. While the private sector universities have invested significantly in PR staff development through overseas training in Private University A, and regular local or online trainings in Private University B, the public universities tend to outsource such requirements to external parties, as summarised in Figure 8-11.

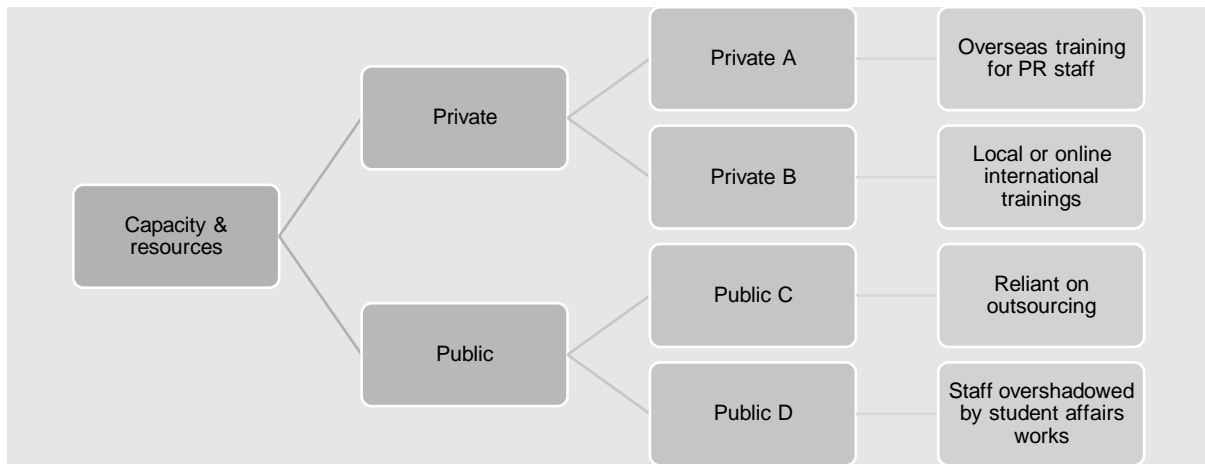


Figure 8-11: Capacity and resources in PR departments

Although there are similarities in the findings in terms of using in-house training by both types of institutions, the private universities tend to adopt peer-learning, while the public universities arrange workshops facilitated by other departments such as IT and human resources. The literature has provided insights into the transformation of marketing from the logic of considering products, to a process of developing long-term relationships as well as improvement in resources (Porcu et al., 2012). From this context, this study reaffirms that the improvement of resources through trainings and other professional development, as demonstrated by both the public and private universities, although through different approaches, is in agreement with the strategies of IMC. Further evidence has indicated that allocating resources tailored to meet the staff requirements for focused customers can lead to IMC improvement (Eagle et al., 2007).

Despite the challenges of this study accessing certain training portals from the websites of the institutions, the private sector appears to be more market-driven, with trainings conducted, reviewed and stored online for new recruits to utilise, which is in line with their market-driven approach. The following section considers media choice specifically.

8.2.5.1 Media choice

While media choice is a strategic decision in IMC (Foroudi et al., 2017), digital technology in the modern era tends to improve such choices (Kitchen and Burgmann, 2010; Porcu et al., 2017) through the promotion of highly effective social media

platforms among many of the IMC media options (Foroudi et al., 2017; Turner, 2017). This study found both the public and private universities to be utilising social media as their marketing communication tool, but with wider differences in the nature of deployment between these public and private institutions. For example, while Private University A has three active social media profiles, Private University B has seven with up to 46,000 followers on one account. In contrast, the public universities use one or two active social media accounts, while the others are not regularly updated and feature minimal followers.

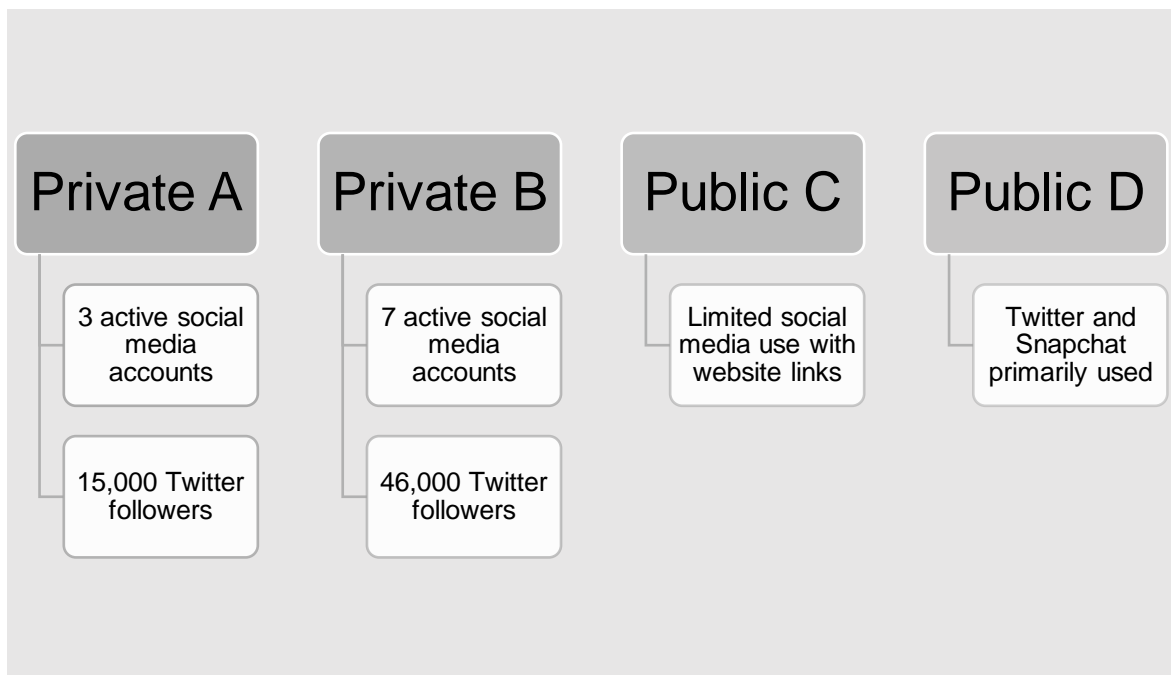


Figure 8-12: Media selection among the KSA’s universities

The findings from this study identify a divergent view in the domain of social media use for brand building. Despite previous study suggesting less significance of social media and advertisement for brand elements in HE (Foroudi et al., 2017), this research finds that the use of social media within the KSA’s private-university context has significantly improved the visibility and brand through marketing communication within and outside the KSA. This could imply that although the brand may not be directly influenced by social media, marketing communications via social media could help attract identity for the university.

The implications of these findings are that within the scope of this study, private sector universities are strongly engaging with digital technologies in their marketing

communications compared to their public counterparts, which again underscores the divide between the market and hierarchical culture according to the competing values framework.

Another interesting finding to emerge from this study is the manner in which the communication culture is handled and managed in each of the institutions, which provides close proximity to the work of Hall, as seen in Figure 8-13. While Public University C's communication at the PR department level is more intimate and hierarchical among the staff, providing indication of high-context cultural communication in line with the work of Hall (Kittler et al., 2011; Bernstein et al., 2016), Private University B's communication is more low context due to the greater use of codes and digital technologies in its marketing communications (Bernstein et al., 2016).

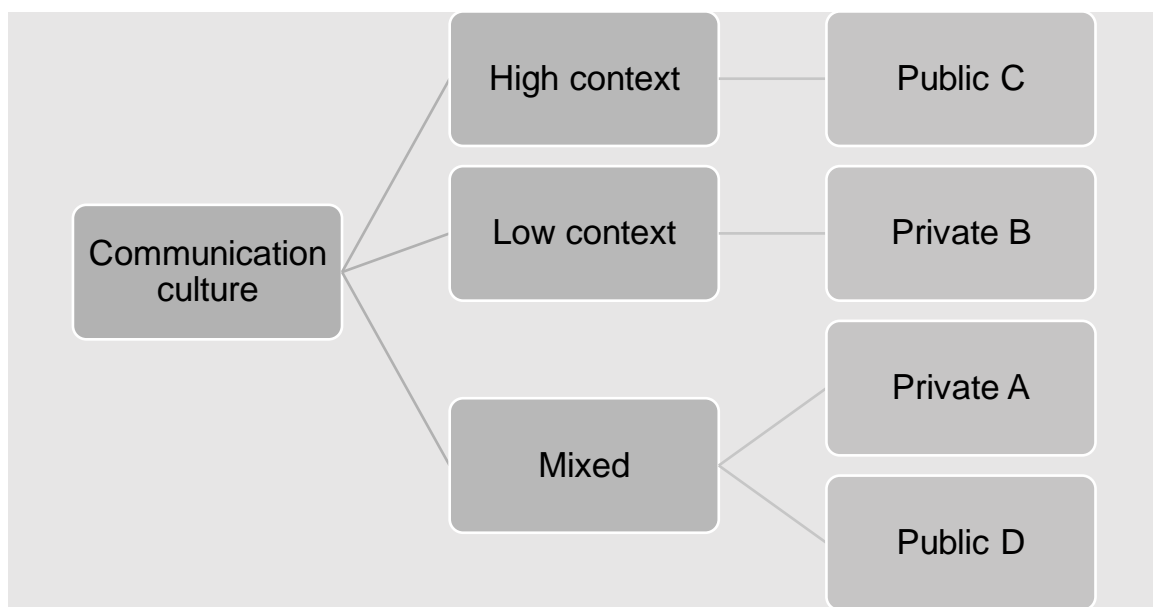


Figure 8-13: Communication culture based on the work of Hall

A mixed-communication culture of high and low context was observed in Private University A and Public University C, where both institutions deploy digital technologies with a mixed physical context of communication and social media coding (Kittler et al., 2011).

In the contemporary era, digital technological interventions such as social media have increased the range of platforms available for interactivity, technology forecasting (Lichy and Merle, 2020) and integration (Racat et al., 2021), and hence have provided

significant improvements to how customers can be reached (Mathew and Soliman, 2021), as exemplified by the manner in which the private universities in the KSA are gaining increased attention.

Research has reported the increasing popularity of digital innovation technologies (Lichy and McLeay, 2021), and how such organisations can communicate with customers through social media to develop long-term relationships, leading to significant improvements in marketing communications (Foroudi et al., 2017; Turner, 2017). The findings from this study have corroborated much of the literature in the broader context of the different functionalities of digital technology and its increasing trends in the KSA, particularly social media utilised for communications, developing online connections, broadcasting, online presence, socialisations and information sharing, among other uses (Kizgin et al., 2020). Among such usage, communication and broadcasting marketing events were found to be the main social media activities among the studied PR departments in the KSA. Besides the findings of social media use for marketing communications among the universities in the KSA, one of the interlinked findings from the social media handles of the studied universities is the culture of communication on such platforms. In addition to the communication content and patterns, Public University C was noticed to have stronger social bonds among the PR staff based on the messages posted, with posts made outside working hours or even on weekends, thus providing insight that the staff at that institution have a greater culture of commitment towards their work, even outside the boundaries of normal office hours. This type of social bond exists in high-context culture according to the work of Hall (Salleh, 2005; Kittler et al., 2011). Such communication pattern in Private University B differed, with marketing communications posted only during the normal working hours, which could indicate low social bonds among the staff in such private universities, characterised by a low-context culture. Although Private University A and Public University D had some posts published marginally outside normal office hours, this may also be linked to errors within the information posted on the social media handles. This provides evidence of a mixed nature of cultural communications context, which could signify that despite the KSA's high-context culture in social media communication among universities, private universities are redefining the landscape of such into a diluted low-context culture according to the work of Hall.

Having discussed the media findings that emerged in Chapter 7, in conjunction with the literature reviewed in chapters 2–4, the following section describes how the research framework is developed in this study.

8.3 Developing a research framework based on the study

This study explored the role of national and organisational culture in IMC practices among four universities in the KSA, using five different models and theories that underpin several interlinkages between the institutions. The framework was composed of relevant elements from the Hofstede model for natural culture, the cultural web model and the competing value framework for organisational culture, the work of Hall for cultural context, and the 4-stage model for IMC. The developed framework considers four essential features from the five models, which shape the IMC practices in the studied institutions, as shown in Figure 8-14. The power distance element has influenced the structure of the public institutions to be more hierarchical according to the competing values framework, due to the long delays because of the need for approval and implementation for IMC events. Meanwhile, in the private sector, the diluted power distance driven by the market-based nature of the institutions has led them to be more market structured. This is not surprising, with the findings considering the significant financial integration as part of the 4-stage model in implementing marketing communications with university-wide strategies for staff and student recruitment as a characteristic of profit-driven institutions. In terms of the Hofstede model's masculinity versus femininity element, the four institutions were categorised based on their gender balance among the PR department and other units, with Private University A having a gender-diversified workplace, while Private University B's workplace is somewhat gender-diverse, which represent a significant dilution of the national culture of male-dominant institutions in the KSA. On the other hand, Public University D was found to be heavily male-dominant, as was Public University C, although some female staff members were identified among the leadership and staff of the PR department.

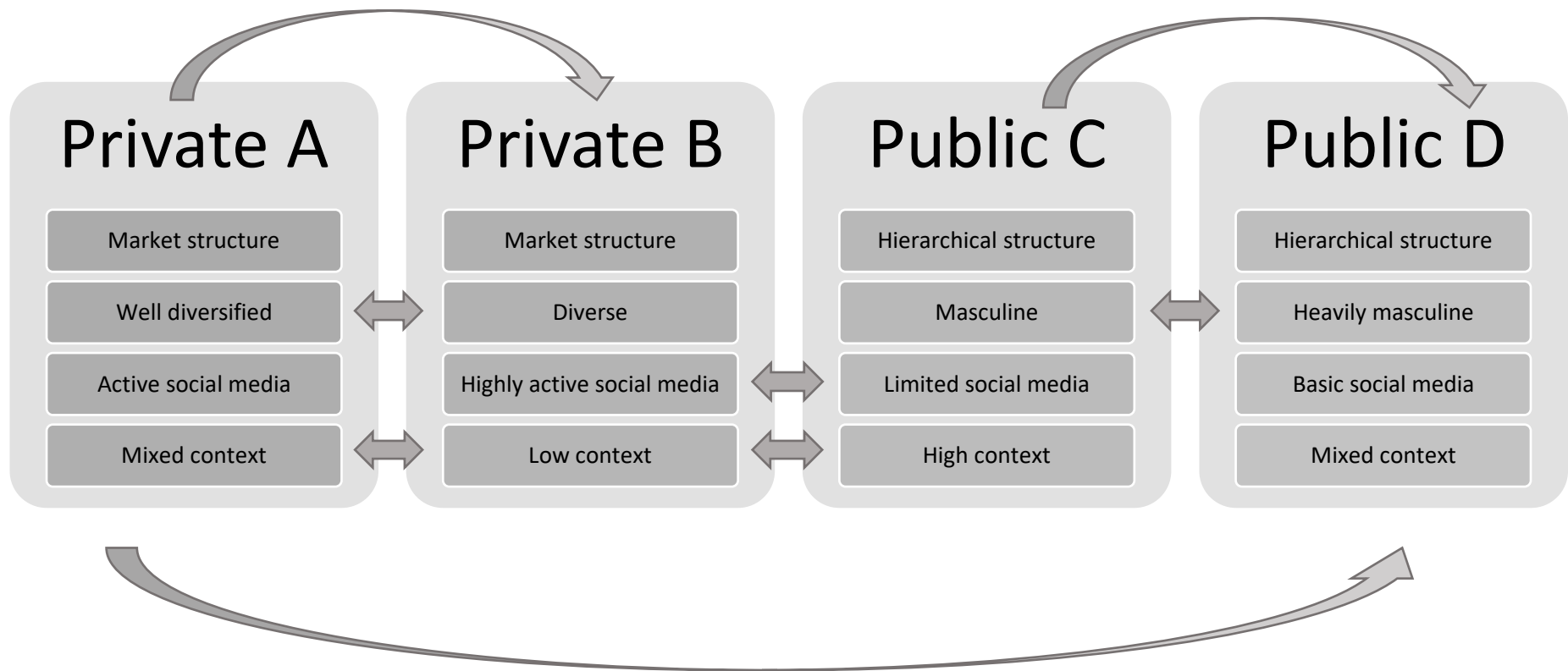


Figure 8-14: The developed research framework

The study also explored the role of digital technologies through social media usage as part of the 4-stage model, which highlighted a variety of characteristics among the four institutions of focus in terms of their social media deployment in marketing communications. Hall's work was equally used to understand the communication culture among the institutions, which provided low-context, high-context and mixed-context culture based on the social orientation, responsibility, communication and confrontation among the staff of the PR departments.

This study finds that the KSA's national culture elements of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity have influenced public universities C and D in shaping their organisational objectives, structures and segregation, compared to private universities A and B that have succeeded in driving a market culture of the competing values framework, thereby shaping their objectives, structure and workplace diversity through IMC implementation. Again, the public sector universities are more closely aligned to high-context culture according to the work of Hall, compared to the dominantly low-context private universities in the elements of commitment, communication and social interactions when implementing their IMC practices, as shown in Figure 8-14.

According to the framework developed by this study and presented above in Figure 8-14, the KSA's national culture of power distance has influenced the structure of HE in both the public and private domains, although the public universities are more affected due to their retention of a hierarchical structure and organisational objectives, similar to those favoured by the uncertainty avoidance factor in implementing their IMC strategies.

The next section draws this chapter to a close with a summary of the discussion of the research findings carried out above.

8.4 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the influence of national and organisational culture on how the public and private KSA universities implement their IMC practices, as developed based on the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis in Chapter 7. The discussion highlighted the changing narrative of organisational structure, leadership, objectives and technology, among many others, including marketing

communications. The nuances between the public and private universities were discussed, as well as the similarities within the scope and limitation of this study. The revised framework for the study was thus established in this chapter.

The next chapter provides the conclusion for the study, as well as the recommendations, the implications for research and practice, and a personal reflection from the researcher.

Chapter 9

Conclusion and Recommendations

9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the key research findings based on the aim and objectives of the study, in order to comprehend the impact of national culture and organisational culture on shaping the IMC implementation among public and private universities in the KSA.

9.2 Summary of main findings

The focus of this study was to understand the influence of national and organisational culture on IMC implementation among public and private universities in the KSA, through exploring the relevance of the KSA's national culture in shaping organisational culture towards IMC strategies. The findings indicate a strong link between the KSA's national and organisational culture among the public and private universities in terms of implementing IMC strategies. The public universities demonstrate high-power distance and uncertainty avoidance due to the organisational structure being hierarchical, compared to the private universities that exhibit less power distance and uncertainty due to their market-driven structure, thereby promoting less control and greater power in implementing IMC strategies in agreement with the competing values framework. New insights emerged, whereby even at the same level of staff in the PR departments of the public and private universities, the budget flexibility tends to affect public universities to a greater extent than their counterparts in private universities in implementing marketing communications. On another note, nuances were found to exist even in the private–private and public–public contexts, although the dyads share more similarities than differences. In the same pattern, it was found that the organisational objectives are influenced by the national culture, with public universities operating their social objectives of providing services to the community and being less driven to structural change to deliver those strategic objectives in marketing communications, while the private universities' market-driven campaign has pushed them beyond the KSA's national culture, through changing the structure of the PR

departments, as well as the composition, competencies and targets, in order to remain competitive within and outside the KSA in recruiting students and staff. The private universities have a greater proportion of international students and staff as evidence of their marketing communications campaigns, particularly from neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Bahrain and Kuwait, among others.

In the area of leadership, it was found that the public universities are primarily male-dominant, although one of the two public universities features some female leadership, echoing the male-dominated leadership in the KSA, whereas the private universities have generally increased the female leadership, even among the deans and senior levels of the PR departments. Despite the diverging view of leadership composition among the institutions, the public universities were observed to exhibit high-context leadership culture within the responsibility element of the work of Hall, as the leadership takes responsibility for the actions of the PR department staff in the case of errors, while the private universities' low-context culture exposes the PR department staff to disciplinary measures in such instances.

In the area of digital technology, generally all the four universities are using such technology to different extents for marketing communications. However, the private universities have managed to develop specialised resources and skill sets for their PR department, which enable them to manage their social media and websites independently, while the public universities primarily outsource such services as part of their tactical coordination of the 4-stage model. Having summarised the main findings, the next section restates all four of the research objectives established in section 1.4.3, and describes how each of these has been achieved.

9.3 Objectives and how they have been achieved

This section describes how the four main research objectives have been achieved.

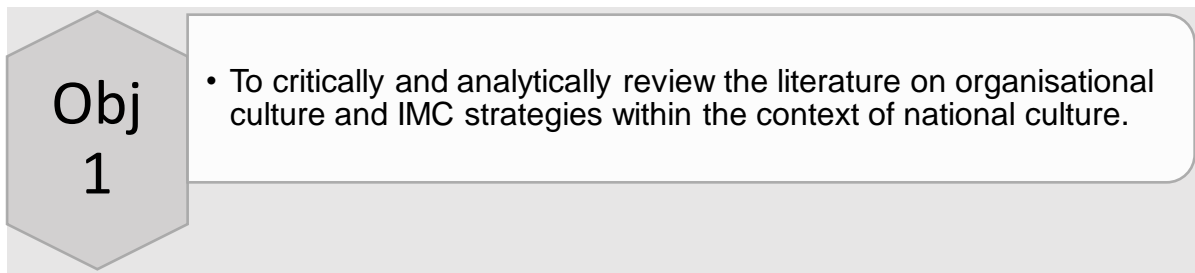


Figure 9-1: Objective one

Objective 1 has been achieved through a critical and analytical review of the available literature on national culture (Chapter 2) and organisational culture (Chapter 3) in relation to IMC in HE (Chapter 4). Since the focus of this study was the relevance of national culture in the KSA, the Hofstede model was adopted due to the high-power distance indices, uncertainty avoidance and the masculine versus feminine elements that suited this study, while the high and low contexts of the work of Hall were discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 reviewed the concept of organisational culture, as well as its definition, application and the underpinning theories, with relevant theories suitable for this study extracted and adopted including the cultural web model and the competing values framework. The cultural models and concepts derived from the literature in chapters 2 and 3 formed the basis for exploring IMC in Chapter 4.

The critical literature on IMC was explored in Chapter 4, including its definition, process steps and stakeholders, which consider IMC as a strategic business process employed for developing, planning, executing and evaluating coordinated marketing communications programmes that are relevant to an internal and external audience. Various IMC models and frameworks were discussed, with this study selecting the 4-stage IMC model due to its constituent elements that are suitable for sectors such as the KSA's HE efforts to implement IMC within their organisations.

Obj
2

- To formulate a theoretical framework that interlinks the various models and elements from the literature with IMC strategies.

Figure 9-2: Objective two

Having identified the suitable models and framework for this study in chapters 2,3 and 4, Objective 2 sought to formulate a research framework that constitutes the relationship between the various models and the IMC strategies, as achieved in Chapter 4 that provided a detailed justification for the model selection and the respective elements adopted for this study. Overall, five models were interlinked with IMC strategies: (i) the Hofstede model, exploring the KSA's national culture; (ii) the cultural web, analysing the organisational culture; (iii) the work of Hall, exploring high- and low-context culture; (iv) the competing values framework, exploring the organisational structure type; and (v) the 4-stage model, as a model for IMC implementation. The theoretical framework developed in Chapter 5 was then employed as a lens in the data collection and analyses that led to developing the final research framework.

The theoretical framework (see Figure 5-1) represented a foundation from which to conduct the data collection, analysis and presentation of the research findings. The theoretical framework proposed to identify and comprehend the impact of the KSA's national and organisational culture on the IMC elements in the HE of the KSA.

Obj
3

- To critically review the developed framework based on the collected data, and to establish whether there are any incongruities between the espoused theory and theory in use for the KSA.

Figure 9-3: Objective three

Objective 3 was achieved through the rigorous thematic analysis of the collected data to establish the interlinkages of the various elements of the five models in relation to IMC strategies.

This was realised through Chapter 7, where thematic analysis was conducted for the different models and theories, which identified the key relationships between the elements in the public and private universities under study in the KSA. It also identified the different dimensions that each university was aligned to in terms of the five models utilised.

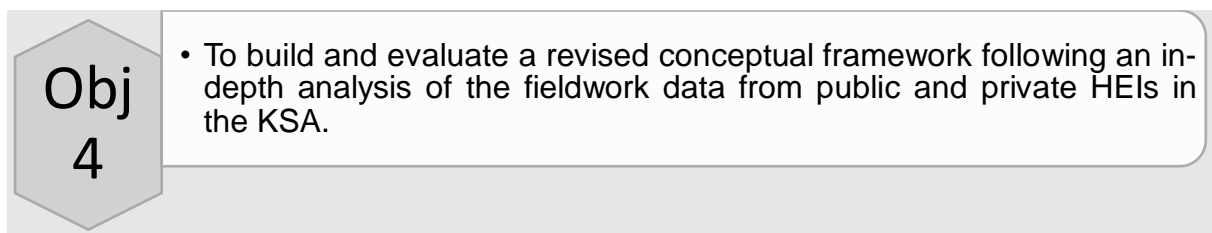


Figure 9-4: Objective four

Objective 4 was achieved through Chapter 8, which conducted an in-depth discussion of the key findings and further developed a revised framework that captures the key findings from this study (see Figure 8-14).

In the following section, the research contributions are presented in terms of the contributions to theory and to practice made by this study.

9.4 Research contributions

9.4.1 Contribution to theory

Due to the new and evolving nature of IMC practices in the KSA, which is characterised by the high national culture of power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity indices, the major theoretical contribution of this study is its ability to explore the relevance of both the national and organisational culture within the public and private sector HE in implementing the IMC strategies. This was further evidenced by the inclusion of five pertinent models and theories for implementing IMC strategies: the Hofstede model and the work of Hall for national culture, the competing values framework and cultural web for organisational culture and structure, and the 4-stage model for IMC. These five models and theories were presented in a research

framework that provided holistic linkages between the different interplays of factors regarding how the national and organisational culture theories interrelate, and how these factors affect IMC implementation in HE in the KSA context in a comparison between the public and private sectors, thus providing a literature basis for improving current theories.

9.4.2 Contribution to practice

The findings from the current study have significant implications for practice in the KSA's public and private universities. For the public universities, the study's findings are seen as an opportunity for learning and implementing marketing communications strategies that could support both the social responsibilities for such universities, as well as the strategy for improved brand recognition, even among the public sector universities, which is an important factor when choosing a public university as a preferred institution for study. Additionally, the findings provide an opportunity for the structural changes of the operations of the public universities, particularly in the area of the approval processes and budget flexibility, as these can support the PR department and others to meet their departmental targets. The aspect of gender segregation is also a key finding for practice in public universities, considering the potential benefits reported by this study in the private sector universities that have adopted mixed-gender workplaces.

In terms of diversity and segregation, the public universities can learn how the private universities are operating successfully in a diverse environment that encourages diversity by giving equal opportunity to both the men and women. An opportunity that can be taken from the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of the segregated workplace environment in Saudi Arabia is where people of both genders are working from home but are still targeting the same objective that could be the infrastructure to facilitate activities, or collaborative decision-making through the online environment. The focus is placed on how to strategically create synergy within the department in terms of recruitment and reward, so leadership can choose the same approach to create a diverse environment to develop and implement IMC strategies. Meanwhile, the private sector universities can learn from the various brand elements of UK universities implementing IMC, which include market research, websites and staff profiles that can help improve marketing communication and the university's image.

The practical significance of this study is that it considers a country (i.e., the KSA) with high national culture indices, while having a significant economic and organisational potential to improve through globalisation and the implementation of IMC in current HE practice. This study could help influence a gradual reduction of such national power indices through organisational cultural changes in IMC practices, to enable organisational growth in the KSA similar to that established in the literature and by current global practices.

With the research contributions now stated, the limitations of the study are presented in the following section with acknowledgements of where, on reflection, improvements could be made.

9.5 Limitations

Despite the comprehensive study findings that interlink different aspects of organisational culture and national culture in IMC strategies, this study suffers from a number of limitations, which affect its generalisability. Among such limitations is the limited number of public and private universities included in the study, which was only four institutions and did not include the highest ranked public universities in the KSA that have standardised systems and are ranked highly by international metrics. This could be addressed in future through including a larger sample size, although it was impracticable in this work due to the geographical size of the KSA that restricts travel and data gathering. The study also suffers a limitation in terms of the inability to access any of the male participants in person for face-to-face interviews, whereby the interviews were conducted instead via a video call on a mobile phone. This is in contrast to the female participants, who made themselves available for face-to-face interviews. The recognition of the study limitations naturally leads on to suggestions for future work in section 9.6 below, through which the aforementioned limitations could be addressed, and the research direction further advanced.

9.6 Suggestions for future research

Despite the broad and in-depth data collected and analysed in this study, it has opened additional areas that could be explored further by considering the new nature of the KSA universities in terms of the revealed IMC implementation. Future studies could explore some of the highest-ranked public universities in the KSA, which this study

could not achieve. Other areas that could be explored further include the other aspect of IMC practices in the KSA in terms of the students' and family's perspectives as the participants, rather than the PR department staff alone considered in this study.

Additionally, the philosophical position and research method used in this study adopted qualitative research methods with a social constructionist epistemological position, whereby an in-depth inquiry was conducted with a small number of participants (n=36). The qualitative research methods employed proved beneficial in gathering a rich understanding of the research context, with data collected through semi-structured interviews. However, future research could take the opportunity to collect data from a greater number of organisations across different sectors through quantitative research methods, as this approach is more applicable when collecting data from a large number of participants. Additionally, an ethnographic approach to observe the live working environment could be beneficial to comprehend how cultural factors impact on the development and implementation of IMC strategies in public and private organisations.

In the final section below, which draws the chapter and the thesis to a close, I reflect on the journey I have taken to arrive at the completion of this thesis from academic, professional and personal perspectives.

9.7 Reflections on the PhD journey

I believe that my position in this research is based on my own values, which have influenced the philosophical position adopted, based on my belief that knowledge is developed through the everyday interactions of the social actors who are part of a phenomenon. This thinking is aligned with social constructionism and subjective belief regarding the nature of knowledge. Therefore, I sought to conduct an in-depth inquiry through gathering the perspectives of the social actors (professionals) involved in the development and implementation of IMC in public and private universities in the KSA. The selection of the topic was based on my own personal and professional circumstances, which led me to conduct research on the exploration of organisational culture's impact on the development and implementation of IMC strategies in HE in the KSA. These relevant circumstances include the fact that my professional role is a marketing lecturer at a state university in the KSA, while I am also involved in marketing communications activities at my university. Therefore, I observed through

my professional practice that the organisational culture of public universities impacts on the development and implementation of IMC strategies. I also sought to consider private sector universities' IMC activities, because I realised that these private institutions are more active and aggressive in their social media marketing activities. These observations led me to investigate the impact of organisational culture on the development and implementation of IMC in public and private universities in the KSA.

My work within HE in the KSA has helped me to conduct research as an insider in my own university, and as an outsider in the other universities involved in the study. Due to my association with a public sector university, I strived to ensure objectivity during the data collection, analyses and presentation of research results. I applied a theoretical lens to these tasks, which increased my research skills in applying theories in a real-life context. For example, I explored theoretical elements such as the role of control and power systems and structure, and their impact on IMC development and implementation in both types of universities, which has increased my skill in exploring the context through theoretical lenses. Consequently, the application of these theoretical perspectives helped to explore the context without any bias, while supporting the in-depth exploration of the context. Furthermore, I found that the nature of the researcher–participant relationship can also be influenced, which then influences the information shared by participants with the researcher; for example, a female participant might feel more comfortable sharing her concerns and personal issues with another woman than with a male researcher. Through my interactions with the participants, I believe that I have improved my interviewing skills that enabled the collection of rich data for this study.

I have also learned to manage my personal, professional and research life simultaneously, as a PhD is a long journey. Without life management and problem-management skills, it would have been challenging to complete such a lengthy research project. Additionally, I have learned to manage supervisor and student relations, which I feel will be useful for my professional life in terms of supervising students. Moreover, I experienced pressure when my supervisory team was changed, and a period of transition was necessary for me to begin to work with the new team. Therefore, I have also learned about the transition of research from one supervisory team to another, in terms of providing the required information about the journey of the research, what has already been achieved and how to move forward. I have been

fortunate to have had such a learned, supportive and cooperative supervisory team to support my completion of this research, and overall, working with this team has been a valuable and rewarding experience that has improved my thesis throughout the research journey.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information S

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET



The Influence of Organisational Culture on Integrated Marketing Communications Strategies in
Higher Education Institutions in Saudi Arabia

A Comparative Case Study Research between Private and Public Universities

Nasiem Mohammed Alyami, PhD researcher

07749797247

Manchester Metropolitan University, Department Of Business and Management

Cheshire Campus, Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU

Private university

Invitation to Participate in this Study

You are cordially invited to participate in this PhD research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take a few minutes to read the following information carefully.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is: to explore the influence of organisational culture on integrated marketing communications strategies within two universities in Saudi Arabia.

Research Design

In order that the research can be conducted, this university is being selected as a case study. Data will be collected using a semi-structure interviews (face to face and telephone) The data collection stage will take approximately three months. The semi structured interviews will take only from forty to forty-five minutes with every individual. During which time you will be asked to participate in an interview. The interview will be digitally recorded, with your consent.

Participation in the Research

You have been asked to participate in the research study because you were purposively selected by the researcher as you are a key individual who has the knowledge and the understanding towards the experience of the marketing communications strategies, and you belong to the culture where organisational culture aspect will be examined. Approximately 20 people from the university will be asked to participate in the research. Your contribution is entirely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this Information Sheet to keep and be asked to sign an Interview Consent Form. If you give consent, you will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview

with the researcher and you will be asked a series of semi-structured questions primarily based on the aim of the research. Your interview will last approximately forty to forty-five minutes **the anonymity of your responses is guaranteed and will be treated in strict confidence.** The interviews will be conducted in convenient time and there will be no costs to you personally.

The university has not influenced your selection to take part in the research study in any way. Although you have been purposively selected by the researcher to participate, you should not feel obligated to take part because of the role you play in the university. However, it would be extremely helpful to the research if you felt you were able to participate. If you do give consent, you will be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Potential Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the research, other than it may enable you to develop your understanding to the actual meaning of the marketing communications strategies and mirror your perspective and experience in organisational culture. Also, it would be nice experience to learn how different aspects of organisational culture influenced the marketing communications strategies in your university. In terms of corporate benefits, the research findings may enhance the university's marketing communications strategies performance and it can lead to create a framework to enhance the practices of Brand selling.

Confidentiality

All information collected about you will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material at all times. The data generated in the course of the research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of six years after the completion of a research project, in accordance with Manchester Metropolitan University's research guidelines. In compliance with the Data Protection Act 1988 in the UK, all fieldwork data will be securely stored on a security encrypted laptop computer, desktop computer and memory stick.

Opt Into the Research

If you wish to opt in to the research, please sign the Interview Consent Form and hand it to the nominated research contact in your Company. You will then be offered a convenient day and time to take part in the research. Remember, you can opt out of the research at any time, without giving a reason.

Results of the Study

On completion of the study, the results will be incorporated into the PhD thesis and presented to the university of Manchester Metropolitan, Department of Business and Management, also the data will be used only for academic purposes. As a Participant, you will receive a copy of the results.

Organisation of the Research

I am conducting this research as a full-time Doctoral Student, in the Department of Business and Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. The research study will be conducted under the guidance and supervision of:

1. Dr Jacqueline McLean (Director of Studies): Department of Business and Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cheshire Campus, Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU, Tel: 0161 247 5287 J.E.McLean@mmu.ac.uk
2. Dr Kevin Gallimore (Supervisor), Department of Business and Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cheshire Campus, Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU, Tel: 0161 247 5026 K.Gallimore@mmu.ac.uk
3. Dr Karl Russell (Supervisor), Department of Business and Management, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cheshire Campus, Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU, Tel: 0161 247 5245 K.R.Russell@mmu.ac.uk

Approval of the Research

This research is conducted within the regulations and policies of Manchester Metropolitan University's Ethical Guidelines. If you have any issues regarding this study, please contact the Faculty Head of Ethics, Dr Katherine Kinmond, at K.Kinmond@mmu.ac.uk

Contact Details

My contact details can be found at the top of this Information Sheet. Please feel free to contact me, on my mobile, during the course of the research study.

Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet. If you have any questions, please contact me and I will be happy to answer them.

Name: Nasiem Alyami

Date: 30/10/2017

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

Name: Nasiem Mohammed Alyami

Manchester Metropolitan University, Department Of Business and Management
Cheshire Campus, Crewe Green Road, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 5DU

The Influence of Organisational Culture on Integrated Marketing Communications Strategies in Higher Education Institutions in Saudi Arabia

A Comparative Case Study Research between Private and Public Universities

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.
3. I agree to take part in the above study by being interviewed.
4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature