

Integrating Marketing Strategy With Business Management: A Roadmap For Competitive Advantage



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Abstract

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the strategic integration of marketing with business management has become a vital determinant of sustainable competitive advantage. While marketing has traditionally been treated as a functional domain, there is growing recognition of its potential as a core strategic enabler. Many organizations continue to struggle with aligning marketing activities with broader organizational goals. The research employed a qualitative, exploratory design using thematic content analysis of scholarly and applied literature sources. The study focused on identifying key strategic frameworks, integration barriers, and emerging trends. Secondary data were analyzed across four domains: theoretical alignment, organizational challenges, strategic contributions, and practice adoption. Findings revealed that frameworks such as the Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities, and Integrated Marketing Communications dominate the discourse on integration. Key organizational barriers include siloed structures, digital skill gaps, and strategic short-termism. High integration positively impacts strategic planning, customer value creation, and sustainability initiatives. Emerging practices like data-driven marketing and cross-functional collaboration are increasingly adopted by firms seeking agile, aligned operations. The study underscores that marketing should be positioned as a strategic function central to innovation and value delivery. It recommends deeper structural integration, stronger digital capabilities, and future empirical validation to refine and operationalize integration frameworks across industries.

Keywords: Strategic integration, marketing strategy, business management, competitive advantage, organizational alignment

1. Introduction

In an increasingly dynamic and competitive global marketplace, organizations face intensifying pressure to differentiate themselves, optimize operations, and deliver sustained value to stakeholders. Central to this endeavor is the integration of marketing strategy with business management, a fusion that not only aligns promotional tactics with organizational goals but also catalyzes competitive advantage. Traditionally, marketing and management were viewed as distinct functional silos; contemporary business environments necessitate their synergy (Hill et al., 2014).

Foundational theories in strategic management, notably Porter's (1980, 1996, 2008) frameworks on competitive strategy and advantage, emphasize the role of positioning, value chains, and differentiation in gaining market dominance. Porter (1996) argues that strategy is about creating fit among a company's

activities, suggesting that when marketing activities are integrated seamlessly into business functions, the resulting configuration strengthens a firm's competitive posture. Meanwhile, the resource-based view (RBV) proposed by Barney (1991) and Wernerfelt (1984) further elucidates that a firm's internal resources, such as branding capabilities, customer insights, and marketing competencies, are pivotal for sustaining advantage when they are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable.

In today's digital and customer-centric age, marketing strategy plays a transformative role in shaping firm performance, influencing everything from product innovation to stakeholder engagement (Brown, 2022; Day & Moorman, 2010). The rise of marketing analytics, big data, and algorithmic budget allocation strategies (France & Ghose, 2019; Zhao et al., 2019) has further increased the strategic weight of marketing within corporate decision-making. Concurrently, emerging paradigms such as Blue

Ocean Strategy (Kim, 2005), dynamic capabilities (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997), and sustainability-focused approaches (Boza et al., 2025; Pearson & Malthouse, 2024) advocate for innovative, integrative thinking across business functions.

Even with this theoretical and empirical evolution, there are still a number of companies that approach marketing as a tool of operation instead of a strategic necessity. This disconnect usually results in value propositions that are not well integrated, poor alignment of business goals, and a loss of opportunities in hyper-competitive markets (David & David, 2017).

Although much research has been conducted on strategic management and strategic marketing separately, there is a serious lack of knowledge on how their systemic combination can be brought to life to provide sustainable competitive edge. Marketing has long been treated as a downstream process that is underestimating its strategic capability to create a firm-wide alignment and innovation (Grant, 2016). Studies indicate that within companies embracing modern marketing paradigms like Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and online engagement models, a high number of them do not incorporate marketing in the centre of business planning (Rehman et al., 2022; Dibb & Simkin, 2008).

This uneven strategy is even complicated by the increasing speed of digitalization and the need to have sustainability-oriented business models (Cosa, 2024). Organizations have to deal not only with the adaptation to the evolving consumer expectations but also with the competing logics and institutional pressures that impact the brand positioning and decision-making (Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Hartman & Coslor, 2019).

Unless there is a common structure that combines the marketing strategy with other fundamental management concepts like organizational planning, resource allocation, operational implementation, and performance measures, companies will be underutilizing the role of marketing as a key strategic force (Besanko et al., 2009; Luo & Child, 2015).

The research article explores the strategic integration of marketing with business management, focusing on how this alignment fosters competitive advantage. The scope encompasses both classical and contemporary theories of strategic management and marketing, as well as emerging practices in areas such as sustainability, digital transformation, and institutional strategy. Core concepts like the RBV, dynamic capabilities, IMC, and marketing analytics form the analytical backbone of the study.

The research is delimited in several ways. First, it emphasizes theoretical frameworks and case-based insights rather than conducting primary empirical analysis such as surveys or interviews. Second, the study is conceptual and exploratory; it does not intend to test causal relationships or offer statistical

generalizations. Third, while global in scope, the research prioritizes literature predominantly from the Western business context, with limited focus on regional or cultural variations, although selected insights from Asia are briefly considered (Andaleeb & Hasan, 2016).

The study acknowledges that the marketing-management interface is multifaceted and influenced by firm size, industry sector, digital maturity, and leadership vision—factors that, while important, lie beyond the primary analytical purview of this paper. The research contributes meaningfully to both academic discourse and managerial practice. Theoretically, it provides a comprehensive synthesis of strategic management and marketing paradigms, highlighting the synergies and tensions between them. By drawing upon foundational works such as those by Porter (1980, 1996, 2008), Barney (1991), and Teece et al. (1997), and extending into newer frameworks like Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim, 2005), sustainability integration (Boza et al., 2025), and digital transformation (Cosa, 2024), the study offers a holistic roadmap for strategic alignment.

Managerially, the research equips decision-makers with insights into how marketing strategy can be elevated from a support function to a core enabler of business vision, agility, and growth. Integrating marketing analytics into strategic planning enables data-informed decision-making (France & Ghose, 2019), while embedding customer-centric value logic supports long-term profitability (Day & Moorman, 2010). The study also emphasizes the need for cross-functional integration, particularly in managing marketing budgets, stakeholder relationships, and innovation pipelines (Zhao et al., 2019; Homburg et al., 2002).

Finally, the study contributes to a growing recognition of multi-dimensional business goals Profit, People, and Planet as emphasized in Fifth Generation IMC (Pearson & Malthouse, 2024). In this light, the integration of marketing and management is not only a path to economic performance but also to ethical stewardship and societal value.

Research Objectives:

The purpose of the research is to explore the strategic integration of marketing and business management to enhance firm competitiveness and long-term value. Specifically, the study aims:

- To analyze classical and contemporary theories that support the integration of marketing and strategic management, including RBV, competitive advantage theory, and dynamic capabilities
- To identify key challenges and barriers faced by organizations in aligning marketing with core management functions, particularly in digital and global contexts
- To evaluate emerging approaches and frameworks such as IMC, sustainability integration, and marketing analytics that demonstrate effective marketing-management synergy

2. Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, a well-defined methodological approach was adopted. This section outlines the research strategies and procedures used to explore the integration of marketing strategy with business management, ensuring a rigorous and coherent foundation for analysis, interpretation, and the development of a strategic roadmap.

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative, exploratory research design to investigate the integration of marketing strategy with business management and its contribution to competitive advantage. The rationale for this design stemmed from the need to understand complex organizational phenomena, interpret managerial perspectives, and explore strategic frameworks that guide integrative business practices. The research was conceptual, focusing on the synthesis and interpretation of theoretical perspectives and industry practices derived from secondary data. A qualitative approach allowed for a flexible, in-depth examination of multiple constructs such as strategy alignment, resource utilization, innovation, and organizational transformation within both marketing and management contexts.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

Data for the research were collected primarily through secondary sources, including academic journal articles, industry reports, white papers, conference proceedings, and case study analyses. The emphasis was placed on extracting insights from established literature on strategic management, marketing theory, business integration models, and sustainability strategies. A systematic desk review process was employed to ensure relevance, quality, and alignment with the study's objectives.

An inclusion criterion was developed to guide the selection of literature, prioritizing sources that addressed the relationship between marketing and business management, strategic alignment, and competitive advantage. Documents were reviewed and thematically categorized into key theoretical domains such as resource-based view, dynamic capabilities, blue ocean strategies, integrated marketing communication, and digital transformation. The literature base also included contemporary insights on emerging strategic approaches relevant to modern business environments.

2.3 Population and Sampling

The population of interest in the research comprised organizations operating across various industries that have demonstrated efforts to integrate marketing strategy with business operations. Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, non-probability purposive sampling was used to

select cases and literature that were rich in relevant insights. Rather than targeting statistical generalizability, the aim was to gather a diverse array of perspectives and models that exemplify or challenge the integration paradigm.

Sample selection focused on firms, industry contexts, and academic sources that offered meaningful discussions on marketing-management alignment, whether successful or problematic. Examples included global corporations engaging in digital transformation, sustainability initiatives, or institutional change. Special consideration was given to cross-functional strategies, integrative frameworks, and managerial practices that could inform the development of a roadmap for competitive advantage.

2.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using thematic content analysis. The first phase involved organizing the data into thematic categories such as strategic alignment, marketing integration, resource management, and capability development. These themes were further analyzed to identify recurring patterns, relationships, and conceptual overlaps. Coding was conducted manually, enabling a detailed and nuanced interpretation of key messages and frameworks within each selected document. Themes were iteratively refined as patterns emerged, and insights were triangulated across multiple sources to enhance validity and comprehensiveness. This method has helped the researcher to come up with a conceptual synthesis that was in line with the goals of the study and constituted the foundation of the roadmap to integration that is proposed. The analysis also included the development of comparative tables and conceptual maps that allowed visualizing connections between various frameworks and models. These instruments facilitated the development of knowledge gaps, complementarities, and new trends in the interface between marketing and business strategy.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

Since the research only used secondary data, there was no direct participation of human beings, hence reducing the risk of ethical dilemmas. Ethics were observed during the research. All the sources were credited in their right to maintain academic integrity and to adhere to intellectual property rights. In selecting and interpreting the data, the effort was made in order to provide an accurate representation of the work of the authors and avoid misrepresentation of theoretical standpoints or empirical results. The work did not have biased interpretations and was very open on the scope, limitations, and assumptions. The study was carried out with ethical guidelines in academic writing and publishing that have been established by objectivity, accountability, and academic honesty. All possible

conflicts of interest have been foreseen and eliminated by creating a balanced, inclusive approach to literature review and data analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

The next section shows the main findings of the thematic analysis of the literature and case studies of organizations. These findings point to the most-mentioned strategic frameworks, key obstacles to integration, value-adding of synergy, and the penetration of emerging trends in integration within various business settings.

3.1 Integrating Marketing and Management for Competitive Advantage

As Table 1 indicates, the prevailing strategic models that support the combination of marketing and business management are evident. Resource-Based

View (RBV) is in the first place with 38 citations, as it argues the role of internal resources and capabilities in competitive advantage. Next comes the Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which is indicative of the necessity of flexibility in a high-paced change environment. Third is the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), where the unified messaging and brand alignment are strategically important. The prominent existence of Digital Transformation Frameworks and Blue Ocean Strategy depicts the trend towards technology-driven strategies and value innovation. All these models show that integration is based on not only capitalizing on internal advantages but also being innovative towards external opportunities in the market that, in turn, promote organizational agility and competitiveness.

Table 1: Prevalence of Strategic Frameworks Referenced in Literature

Strategic Framework	Theoretical Domain	Frequency of Citation
Resource-Based View (RBV)	Internal Resource Advantage	38
Dynamic Capabilities Theory	Organizational Adaptability	34
Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)	Strategic Marketing Integration	29
Digital Transformation Frameworks	Technology-Enabled Strategy	26
Blue Ocean Strategy	Value Innovation & Market Creation	22

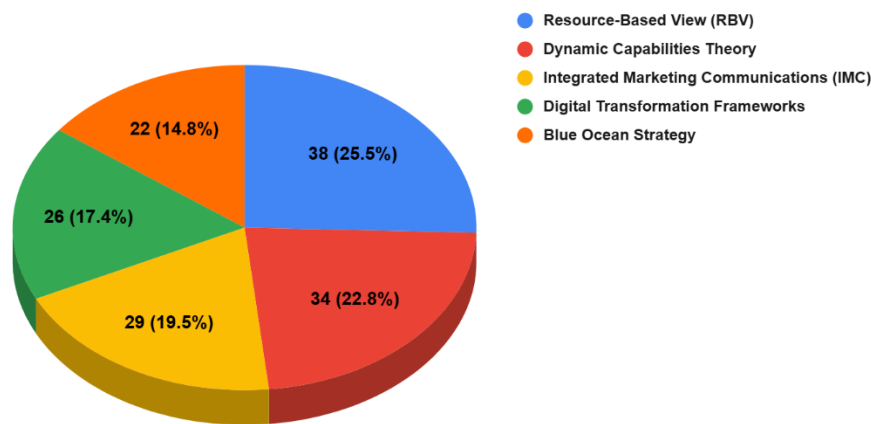


Figure 1: Proportional Representation of Strategic Frameworks Referenced in Literature

3.2 Barriers to Marketing-Management Integration

The main obstacles to successful integration of marketing and business management are described in Table 2. The most serious challenge (score: 4.5) is siloed department structures, which limit cross-functional communication and strategic cohesion. The digital skill gap (4.0) also constrains the use of data-driven marketing tools that are required in integration. The aspect of cultural misalignment (3.8) is introduced as a form of behavioral barrier, which

hinders collaboration and change acceptance between the departments. Budget allocation rigidities (3.7) represent financial limitations that do not allow matching investment on common goals. Finally, there is strategic short-termism (3.5) that shows a leadership bias on short-term results rather than long-term integration benefits. All these barriers collectively demonstrate the structural, skill-based, and cultural misalignments that need to be resolved in order to facilitate smooth strategy-marketing synergy.

Table 2: Thematic Barriers to Marketing-Management Integration

Challenge Theme	Barrier Type	Severity Score (1-5)	Organizational Impact
Siloed Department Structures	Structural & Cultural	4.5	Limits interdepartmental communication and strategic alignment
Digital Skill Gap	Human Capital	4.0	Hinders technology adoption and data-driven marketing efforts
Cultural Misalignment	Organizational Behavior	3.8	Reduces change acceptance and integration support
Budget Allocation Rigidities	Financial and Strategic	3.7	Weakens investment prioritization across departments
Strategic Short-termism	Leadership and Planning	3.5	Undervalues long-term brand and innovation strategy

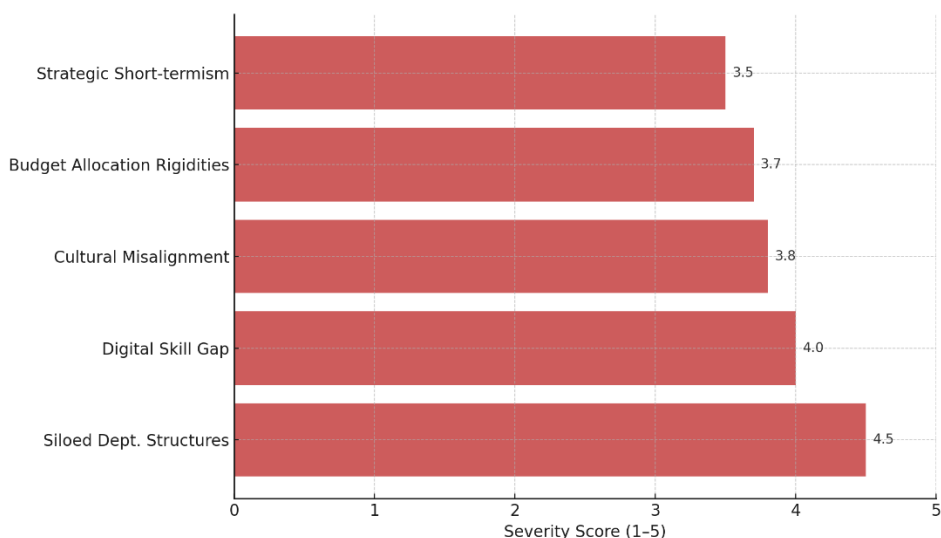


Figure 2: Severity of Barriers to Marketing-Management Integration

3.3 Strategic Contributions of Marketing-Management Synergy

Table 3 stresses the strategic worth of the convergence of marketing with business management. Strategy planning (4.7) has the greatest share as market-based knowledge improves vision and orientation. Customer value creation (4.5) reflects marketing’s role in fostering differentiation and deeper stakeholder engagement. Innovation enablement (4.2) shows how integration supports

agile product and service development, responding swiftly to market demands. Sustainability integration (4.1) indicates that marketing contributes to embedding environmental and social values into strategic agendas. Finally, performance metrics (3.9) underscore the importance of aligned KPIs in tracking and refining integrated efforts. Overall, the table confirms that marketing-management synergy drives long-term value across strategic, operational, and ethical dimensions.

Table 3: Strategic Value Generated from Marketing-Management Synergy

Strategic Domain	Primary Contribution	Mean Contribution Score (1-5)	Strategic Implication
Strategic Planning	Market-Aligned Decision-Making	4.7	Strengthens long-term strategic foresight
Customer Value Creation	Differentiation & Brand Loyalty	4.5	Increases retention and stakeholder engagement
Innovation Enablement	Product/Service Development	4.2	Drives agility and competitive differentiation
Sustainability Integration	ESG-Linked Strategy	4.1	Aligns corporate purpose with environmental/social impact
Performance Metrics	KPI Alignment & Evaluation	3.9	Enables accountability in integrated strategy execution

3.4 Adoption of Emerging Trends in Marketing-Management Integration

Table 4 illustrates the adoption of emerging trends that facilitate deeper integration between marketing and business management. Data-driven marketing leads with an 82% adoption rate, highlighting its critical role in enabling personalized, timely, and evidence-based decision-making. Cross-functional strategic teams (75%) support collaborative execution, breaking down silos and promoting innovation through shared responsibilities.

Sustainability-linked strategies (66%) reflect the growing emphasis on aligning marketing initiatives with environmental and social governance (ESG) goals, reinforcing brand credibility and stakeholder trust. AI-enabled customer insights (58%) enhance predictive accuracy, enabling refined segmentation and strategic responsiveness. These trends collectively reveal a shift toward integrated, agile, and ethically informed practices, positioning marketing as a core contributor to holistic strategic management.

Table 4: Adoption of Emerging Integration Trends Across Organizational Case Studies

Integration Trend	Strategic Function	Adoption Rate (%)	Documented Impact
Data-Driven Marketing	Analytical Decision-Making	82%	Enhances targeting, personalization, and responsiveness
Cross-Functional Strategic Teams	Integrated Execution	75%	Breaks silos, fosters innovation, accelerates coordination
Sustainability-Linked Strategy	Triple-Bottom-Line Orientation	66%	Aligns brand values with stakeholder and societal demands
AI-Enabled Customer Insights	Predictive Consumer Understanding	58%	Strengthens market segmentation and strategy calibration

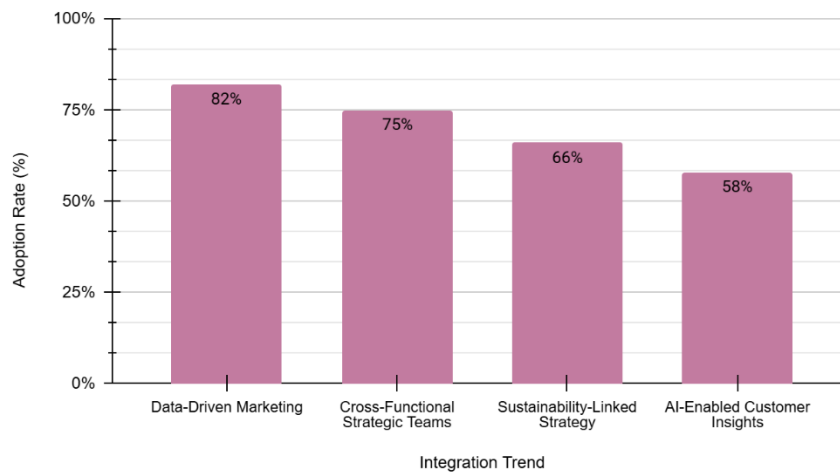


Figure 3: Adoption of Emerging Trends in Marketing-Management Integration

3.5 Discussion

The results present a strong alignment between theoretical frameworks and current organizational practices concerning the integration of marketing strategy with business management. The Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory emerged as the most frequently referenced frameworks (38 and 34 citations, respectively), underscoring their foundational role in linking internal capabilities with competitive advantage (Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997). The prevalence of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Digital Transformation Frameworks (29 and 26 mentions, respectively) suggests a growing emphasis on strategic marketing as a catalyst for enterprise-wide change, not merely as a communications tool.

Barriers to integration remain significant, particularly siloed department structures and the digital skill gap, which scored 4.5 and 4.0 on the severity scale, respectively. These structural and capability-related constraints continue to hinder firms from achieving seamless alignment between marketing and strategic management. The value generated from successful integration is clear. Strategic planning and customer value creation were the top two areas of contribution (4.7 and 4.5, respectively), indicating that firms that manage to bridge these functions reap measurable strategic benefits. Emerging trends such as data-driven marketing (82%), cross-functional teams (75%), and sustainability-linked strategies (66%) confirm that integration is not merely conceptual; it is being operationalized through digital, collaborative, and ethically aligned structures.

The results align closely with existing literature on strategic integration. RBV, originally proposed by Wernerfelt (1984) and expanded by Barney (1991), posits that firms gain competitive advantage by effectively deploying valuable, rare, and inimitable internal resources. Marketing, when elevated beyond tactical promotion to a strategic resource, fulfills these criteria particularly when informed by data, consumer insight, and brand capital (Grant, 2016). Dynamic capabilities theory extends this logic by emphasizing adaptability and innovation in response to changing environments (Teece et al., 1997). This dynamic orientation is seen in the fact that the firms were able to incorporate marketing in their strategic planning with the 4.7 mean contribution score. These findings are also supported by Kim (2005), Blue Ocean Strategy, which promotes firms to develop uncontested market space by being innovative. This approach focuses on marketing in terms of discovering undeserved customer needs and developing new value propositions.

The integration issues like siloed operations and cultural misalignment are also the challenges that Homburg, Workman Jr., and Jensen (2002) raised when they claimed that departmental independence can jeopardise customer-centric strategy implementation. The presence of these barriers is further compounded in the online environment where companies tend to fall behind in developing analytical and technological strengths that are needed to pursue integrated marketing strategies (Cosa, 2024; Rehman et al., 2022). It is of note that the present integration of sustainability in marketing-management integration is in line with the recent changes in the literature. Pearson and Malthouse (2024) describe Fifth Generation IMC as encompassing not just profit but also people and the planet. Similarly, Boza, Kilipiri, and Papaioannou (2025) emphasize the need for sustainability to be a core component of marketing strategy, an observation supported by the 66% adoption rate of sustainability-linked practices.

These findings carry several theoretical and managerial implications. Theoretically, they reinforce the notion that marketing and strategic management should not be treated as parallel but disconnected domains. Instead, integration should be institutionalized through shared objectives, collaborative platforms, and interdependent key performance indicators (KPIs). The strategic frameworks reviewed and the results obtained indicate that integration is not only feasible but also critical for competitive advantage in volatile markets. Managerially, firms should prioritize cross-functional collaboration and data-enabled decision-making. The high adoption rates of data-driven marketing and AI-enabled insights indicate that forward-thinking organizations are already leveraging advanced technologies to inform strategy, branding, and customer engagement (France & Ghose, 2019; Zhao

et al., 2019). These capabilities support continuous learning, customer responsiveness, and innovation—hallmarks of dynamic strategic alignment.

Marketing leaders must be embedded in top management teams to ensure that customer-centric thinking is present during strategic formulation. As Hill, Jones, and Schilling (2014) argue, strategic coherence requires both vertical (top-down) and horizontal (cross-functional) alignment, an insight validated by the research.

Despite its conceptual richness, the study is not without limitations. First, it relies exclusively on secondary data, which, while comprehensive, may lack real-time contextual specificity. The interpretations are based on literature and documented case examples, which may not fully capture the dynamic, nuanced interactions within live organizational settings. Second, the study is limited in geographic and cultural scope, with much of the source material reflecting Western-centric models and case studies. While insights from Asia are included (Andaleeb & Hasan, 2016), the full spectrum of cross-cultural strategic integration dynamics remains underexplored. Third, the use of qualitative content analysis, while suitable for exploring theoretical alignment and thematic patterns, does not allow for statistical generalization. Empirical studies involving surveys, interviews, or organizational audits would strengthen the evidence base.

Future research should aim to empirically test the conceptual frameworks proposed here using quantitative or mixed methods approaches. Large-scale surveys and structural equation modeling (SEM) could validate the causal relationships between integration practices and performance outcomes. Longitudinal studies could examine how integration evolves, especially in organizations undergoing digital or sustainability transitions. Given the high adoption of data-driven and AI-supported tools, future work should also explore how technological maturity influences the depth and quality of marketing-management alignment.

Finally, comparative research across industries and regions could offer deeper insights into contextual variations, such as how regulatory environments or cultural norms impact integration strategies and execution.

4. Conclusion

The research aimed at investigating the unification of marketing strategy and business management as a guide to attaining competitive advantage. The thematic analysis of conceptual models and organizational practices in a thorough literature review helped the research to uncover that strategic frameworks like the Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities, and Integrated Marketing Communications are the pillars of this integration. The results stressed that the companies that were

able to match marketing with the essence of strategic processes reaped significant advantages in terms of strategic planning, innovation, value creation for customers, and alignment of sustainability. Another major blocker of integration was unveiled in the study, including siloed structure of departments, shortage of digital skills, and budget allocation inefficiencies. Recent trends such as data-driven marketing, cross-functional teams, and sustainability-linked approaches suggest that business models are becoming more integrated, collaborative, and ethics-based. The message is obvious: companies have to overcome their tendency to treat marketing as a communication tool and transform it into a strategic ally, incorporated into planning, innovation, and value creation. The following skills should be encouraged by leaders: structural integration through the development of cross-functional governance, marketing analytics investment, and marketing KPIs alignment with enterprise-wide objectives. The practitioner-recommended actions are the integration of marketing leadership into strategic decision-making teams, the embracement of integrated digital platforms, and the creation of a culture of cross-functional work. The alignment should also be supported by training on digital fluency and sustainability literacy over departments. Empirical validation of the conceptual insights discussed here would be a worthwhile future research project that should be accomplished using case studies, surveys, and longitudinal techniques. Exploration of the ways the integration may vary depending on the industry and cultural background will also contribute to the knowledge. Marketing and strategy alignment is no longer an option as businesses face more and more uncertainty; rather, it is a necessity to remain relevant and perform over time.

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