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# SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICE MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR CUSTOMER ACQUISITION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED SEGMENT

– myTrueSound Oy case study

BACHELOR'S | ABSTRACT

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# SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICE MARKETING AS A TOOL FOR CUSTOMER ACQUISITION IN THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED SEGMENT

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The objective of the thesis is to find out the way how mobile game company can reach the blind and visually impaired customer segment by utilizing SNS platform and acquire new customers. The research presents how this customer segment communicates with each other online and the challenges they meet while they are on SNS platforms. By understanding the challenges of this customer segment while they are on SNS platforms and the preferences in marketing method, the case company, myTrueSound Oy can plan the marketing strategy.

The data gathered from the surveys and the interviews presents that the blind and visually impaired people go through different challenges than sighted people which is why the accessibility is so important to them when they are online. Via quantitative data analysis, YouTube shows the most possibility to garner the potential blind and visually impaired customer segments. Even if the company develops mobile games that has no visual effects, publishing marketing content on YouTube with visual contents is meaningful. However, to be more efficient in marketing, collaborating with the blind and visually impaired YouTube influencers adds more value to it. The population of those influencers' followers consisted with higher number of the blind and visually impaired segment. At the same time, exploiting Facebook as the company's complementary SNS platform is also recommended. Facebook is highly used by the blind and visually impaired due to its accessibility. The company can hire Facebook to make more buzz about games and trigger more discussions among the customer segment.

## KEYWORDS:

Audio game, The blind and Visually impaired, SNS marketing, SNS platform, Accessibility

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS**

Abbreviation

ASO	App Store Optimization
B&VI	The Blind and Visually Impaired
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CG	Computer Graphics
SM	Social Media
SMM	Social Media Marketing
SNS	Social Networking Service
WOM	Word Of Mouth

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research Motivation

In our daily life, people receive most information from visualized sources. (Heynderickx, Groen, Beld, 2004) Vision is an important sense for customers to help them decide what they want to buy. It is difficult to imagine how to best reach those customers who may not be able to see. While studying business, there was a chance for me to have an internship interview at a company which develops mobile games for the blind. It was hard to understand how blind people could play games on the mobile phones and how to communicate with this customer segment. However, working at a company that has good will trying to give access to playing games to a social minority group felt like a valuable thing to do. Getting to know more about the blind's life motivated me to study how to reach them through a marketing channel. Since the channels for the blind to communicate with other people and receive information are limited, reaching this segment may present some challenges. Thus, finding a way to market the game apps of myTrueSound Oy is a motivating research work.

## 1.2 Research Objectives and questions

The case company, myTrueSound Oy, is a start-up. It is aiming at developing high quality immersive audio games for the blind. As we see later in the literature review, traditional channels for reaching the blind is through network and family members. As a start-up, myTrueSound Oy has little experience in business. In addition, myTrueSound Oy faces the problem of not having any reference of marketing channel towards B&VI (the blind and visually impaired, B&VI here under). Marketing seems to be a key success criterion for myTrueSound Oy, as important as developing high quality audio games to acquire customers.

There are many tools a company may use to acquire customers, however this research focuses solely on SNS (Social Networking Service, SNS here under). The objective of this thesis is to develop a SNS marketing strategy which is targeting B&VI to acquire as many customers as possible. To design the best SNS marketing strategy for customer acquisition, the following research questions should be answered.

**1) How do B&VI use SNS to connect and communicate with each other?**

It is impossible to plan a marketing strategy not knowing about the target customers. While myTrueSound Oy was executing a market research, the company found out there are B&VI using online tools such as online forums, YouTube, blogs etc. Knowing the fact that blind people use internet, it is important to find out how they use SNS. It may be difficult to understand how B&VI use their mobile devices and modern technologies. This question should be cleared out to make further research possible.

**2) How do B&VI experience SNS marketing?**

To market the games especially to B&VI, the company should know how to approach them on SNS. The basic step to start with is to properly verify technical support of SNS platform to make marketing postings accessible to B&VI. Most SNS marketing strategies have important visual elements in them. However, visual elements are not relevant for B&VI. This is a challenge for myTrueSound Oy to properly plan their SNS marketing strategy.

**3) Which SNS platform(s) should be chosen and how the SNS marketing strategy should be planned to attract the customer segment?**

The knowledge gathered from previous questions will help answer this question. Through survey result, the most accessible SNS platform will be decided. After verifying the SNS platform, the best possible way to reach B&VI will be planned and marketing strategy will be implemented.

### 1.3 The case company

#### 1.3.1 Company History

myTrueSound Oy was established in October 2017. David Oliva, CEO of the company, has been a researcher at Turku University of Applied Sciences as an acoustic specialist and physicist since 2016.

He was working on a project about the psychological impact of noise for people working at a construction site. In the process, his project team needed certain feedback about



sound origination, and the project team started looking for blind people to cooperate about sound perception. While working with the blind, the CEO came up with an idea that he could create immersive audio games for B&VI. In fact, almost all entertainment contents existing now are so much focused on visual effect. B&VI cannot enjoy the contents in the same way that sighted people can, considering the limit of accessibility to those contents. He started gathering information about contents related to B&VI, implemented a survey and recruited team members. So far, the company has been applying for several funding organizations and just released their first game app "Gold Gun".

### 1.3.2 Progress of the company

In the beginning, there were 6 active staff including CEO, David Oliva and 1 business advisor in the company. After establishing the company, the CEO has hired students in cooperation with Turku University of Applied Sciences. One student is from an International Business degree program working for the marketing department, and two game developers are also students from the same University of Applied Sciences. The company's game concept won a competition from AVEK (Anon., 2018) (**The Promotion Centre for Audio-visual Culture: Audiovisuaalisen kulttuurin edistämiskeskus** in Finnish) that supports audio-visual creators and their copyrights in Finland. The company's game demo also won the ICT Turku Show Case in 2018 which proved their possibility to attract interests and adoptability to a real product. It is very important for myTrueSound Oy to develop the games that B&VI are satisfied with the best audio quality, thus the company is collaborating with blind people like Mikko Herranen who is a famous blind singer in Finland. He is a member of the company from the very beginning and advises about sound effect, user experiences, and creating game stories. Most of all, his role in the company is that he represents the company as an ambassador.

#### 1.4 Structure of the thesis

First, the chapter 2 Literature Review presents the definition of SNS marketing and customer acquisition theory. It includes a short introduction to customer retention determinants. Since the customer segment needs to be studied in detail, this part contains information about how B&VI use technology with pictures and descriptions. Most importantly, the definition of accessibility is presented, followed by the manners of B&VI's communication. Finally, this chapter includes on the challenges that B&VI go through when they are on SNS platforms. This is a critical part that the case company should understand for their marketing strategy towards B&VI's.

In consideration of the importance of the target customer which is B&VI, chapter 3 is dedicated to the customer segment study . This chapter introduces introductions of some special aiding tools for B&VI and how B&VI adapt to new technologies. In addition, current situation in game markets for B&VI and the competitors are introduced also.

In the research methodology chapter, the type of data and the process of how primary data and secondary data are collected is explained.

Chapter 5 presents an analysis based on the data gathered with the purpose of answering each research question. First, based on observations, characteristics of B&VI's communication are presented. Next, based on interviews, the challenges of B&VI on SNS platforms are explained. Finally, the use of possible SNS platforms is examined.

In conclusion, it sums up the answers analysed in chapter 5 and presents the limits of the thesis and an orientation for future study is suggested.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 SNS marketing

#### 2.1.1 What is SNS marketing?

Ever since there was technology to connect people on the net, there has been dramatic development on how internet has evolved to these days (Ian, 2004). We share information, connect with people, blog, advertise, sell and market products or services. It is difficult to imagine any limit to what can be done with internet or its contents. In the meantime, there is profusion of terms related to internet-based activities and the use of those terms can be mixing. Therefore, the definition related to SNS marketing will be defined first to make it clear.

The word *social media* is often confused with the word 'SNS'. According to Sharma and Verma, SM (Social Media, SM here under) is online media that enables people to communicate in multidirectional ways in real time thanks to Web 2.0 technology. The range of SM covers platforms such as SNS, blogs, online forums, video and content sharing and podcasts (S. Sharma, H. V. Verma , 2018). SMM (Social Media Marketing, SMM here under) which means marketing implemented on various social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, blogs, vlogs, etc. among many other marketing methods. Thus, SM includes SNS as one of the platforms. It means SMM is a broader concept than SNS marketing.

SNS marketing is one of the marketing methods that companies use to interact with the target markets directly via social networking service platform such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.

The relation among the terms can be demonstrated as below Figure 1.



Figure 1: Relation among SM, SMM, and SNS Marketing <Youngim Gwock>



Figure 2: Examples of SNS platforms <Youngim Gwock>

As social media has huge impact on individuals, organizations, and companies, SNS has been considered to have various advantages for the companies to market their products or their brands. They are cost effective, easy to grab trend changes, and most importantly companies can interact with consumers directly and faster than traditional marketing methods. (Jongho Kim, Jonghei Ra, Taeyang Seo, Yoonyong Hwang, Yongpal Lee, 2013) In the following paragraph, the added value of what SNS marketing could bring to a company will be presented more in detail.

Castronovo and Huang has defined the SNS marketing as one of the alternative marketing methods already in year 2012. Alternative marketing method was considered to have strong WOM (Word of Mouth, WOM here under) effect. It brings reduced cost, efficiency in active engaging in communication and fast reaction from companies to customer feedback. (Castronovo, C., Huang, L., 2012) The effectiveness is still continuing in even stronger manner these days. Considering its crucial influence of WOM in decision making of consumers (Cheema, A., Kaikati, A., 2010), fast spreading SNS marketing can be a powerful and reliable method that consumers share their opinions and suggestions on the product or service (Godes, D., Mayzlin, D., 2004). In the process of WOM, customers' opinion sometimes forms bigger issue than the real situation. With the help of the rise of internet after Web 2.0, consumers were able to find smarter ways to evaluate, choose, share the ideas and experiences in services, brand, and products in consumer's point of view. This change made companies to involve themselves or marketers in social media more actively. (Twente, 2014) Also, it has resulted in companies to focus on more to be trustworthy and think customer oriented. Their online presence should be able to convey the quality of what company pursues in its business in a more efficient way.

The table under shows each different SNS platform with distinctive objectives that companies could focus on according to their demands and purposes.

Table 1: Social Media Tools and Their objectives (Castronovo, C., Huang, L., 2012)  
<modified by Youngim Gwock>

<b>Tools(platforms)</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Chat rooms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve customer service</li> <li>○ Create sense of community</li> <li>○ Garner customer feedback</li> </ul>
<b>Blogs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Drive WOM recommendations</li> <li>○ Build meaningful relationships</li> <li>○ Increase loyalty</li> </ul>
<b>YouTube</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Harness power of video to increase</li> <li>○ Embedding of content in other sites</li> </ul>
<b>Facebook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advertising</li> <li>○ Develop a community</li> <li>○ Target specific audiences</li> </ul>
<b>LinkedIn</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Connect with professional communities</li> </ul>
<b>Twitter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Customer engagement</li> <li>○ Triggers more discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Google Wave</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase collaboration and engagement</li> <li>○ Crowdsourcing</li> </ul>
<b>Instagram</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brand awareness</li> <li>○ Advertising</li> </ul>
<b>Online Forum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop a community</li> <li>○ Triggers more discussion</li> <li>○ Share information</li> </ul>

Despite all the good benefits of SNS marketing, there are matters that company should be aware of. Challenges and drawbacks of SNS marketing and difficulties when B&VI use SNS will be explained in section 2.3.

Attendantly, the metrics to measure efficiency of social media marketing can be analysed at Google Analytics, Yahoo Analytics, Woopra, Clicky, Blog Tracker etc,. (Castronovo, C., Huang, L., 2012) However, measurements of marketing efficiency could be done after the marketing had been implemented already. Hence the metrics tools should be in mind to the company to reach fast to the marketing result.

## 2.2 Customer Acquisition Theory

### 2.2.1 Customer Evolution Process

According to Kumar and Petersen (2012), having sustainable ways to acquire customers are the most basic element of businesses. Customer acquisition means getting new customers in the business. However, it contains strategical approaches and uses tactics from the first step of reaching the customer to finally making them to pay for their products or services (Autopilot, 2016).

Companies choose different SNS channels to acquire new customers. (Weinberg, G., Mares, J., 2015) It depends on the nature of the product and target market. However, customers usually evolve in 6 stages in digital era according to Nasir (Nasir, 2015). It is also called Customer life cycle. (Pono, 2016) Customer evolves from;



Figure 3: Customer evolution process, based on Nasir (2015) <Youngim Gwock>

- ✓ **Visitor:** People who just browse web sites followed by a link, by accident or by needs.
- ✓ **Prospect:** People who express their interests, make efforts to sign up.
- ✓ **Activated:** People who understand the value of products by trying demo or trial.
- ✓ **Customer:** People who pay for products.
- ✓ **Active customer:** People who regularly buy or use the products.

- ✓ **Loyal customer.** People who renew the service or products, buy and are more engaged in the products. (Nasir, 2015)

Figure 3 represents how customer numbers grow narrower as the stages develops. It takes time and endless effort for the company to satisfy visitors and turn them into loyal customers. How customers evolve from ordinary visitors to loyal customers will be explained in next chapter divided into 4 different processes.

### 2.2.2 Customer Acquisition process

Each of the customer stages presented in chapter 2.2.1 can fit in the customer acquisition process. Customer acquisition process elevates from Attracting to Engaging, from Engaging to Converting and finally from Converting to Retaining. The process is as below in Figure 4:

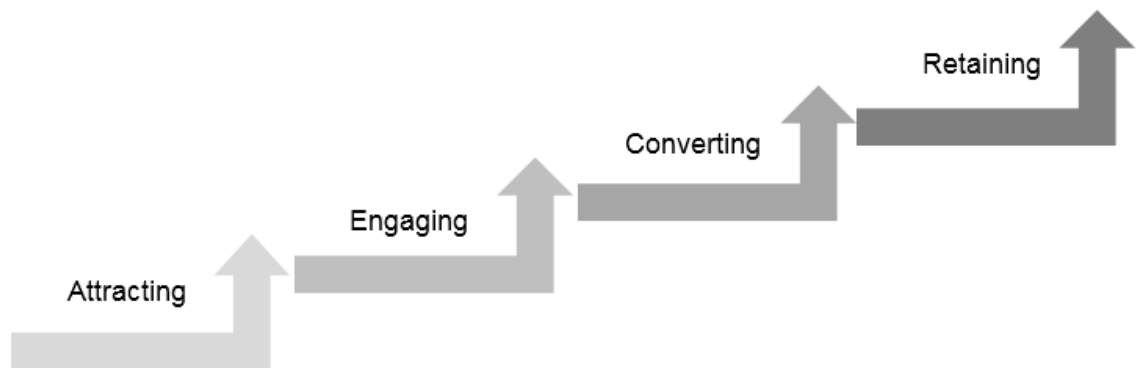


Figure 4: Customer Acquisition Process <Youngim Gwock>

#### **Attracting**

There are many marketing methods for companies to develop customer awareness such as paying advertisement, SNS marketing, public relations, direct mailing, cold calling, WOM, attending fairs etc (Ang, L., Buttle, A., 2006). When potential customers are attracted by various marketing activities, they tend to visit the company website, then engage more into the company and become prospects in customer life cycle.

#### **Engaging**

To convert prospects into customers, companies should have compelling points about their products, service, or some benefits that prospects could get when they engage



more. Also companies must be able to build trust with prospects. The company should put efforts to the value that customers will receive. The value should exceed what they will pay for. Companies should not play tricks just to attract the attention for marketing purpose. They have to keep their words, try to interact with prospects such as giving them chances to try their products or services. (Nasir, 2015)

### **Converting**

If the prospects are satisfied with the products or service, then the moment provides the high possibility that the engaging stage progresses to the converting stage. Once the prospects become customers, there are many ways that the company could encourage the customers to be more active. For example, they could interact more with the customers by taking the feedback seriously, paying more attention to the quality of the product, and keeping the delivery time if the product is a physical item. (Takeuchi, H., Quelch, J., 1983)

### **Retaining**

The company should constantly improve the product quality, take an action to identify potential problems, and enhance user experiences. (Takeuchi, H., Quelch, J., 1983) By giving customers outstanding product or service experience, companies can get more active customers from customers. They will stay loyal to the products and services. According to Rai and Srivastava, there are 9 determinants of customer loyalty and their impact on loyalty. They are service quality, customer satisfaction, trust, commitment, switching cost, corporate image, service recovery, emotions, and communication (Rai, K., Srivastava, M., 2012). On top of those 9 determinants, the quality of the product is a basic element of customer retaining.

In every different customer stage, company can use various tactics of WOM. For instance, the company could offer incentives to people who mention their service or products to their friends, give feedback, post to their blogs and so on. SNS can play an important role in the process of WOM. (Nasir, 2015) At the same time, the company should continuously monitor and track how efficiently their marketing and their operations go in each process to acquire customers and desirably to retain more customers.

## 2.3 SNS marketing for B&VI

### 2.3.1 Accessibility & connectivity for B&VI

When B&VI are online, they face challenges in accessibility more often than sighted people. According to the Cabinet Office of UK government, the definition of accessibility for B&VI refers to when somebody puts similar amount of time and effort, he or she should be able to perform the same tasks as people without disability can do. (Duggin, 2016).

Based on this definition, there is a need to check the level of accessibility that each SNS platform offers for B&VI. When applying the definition of accessibility to SNS use of B&VI, it means B&VI users should be able to:

- ✓ Navigate the menu and find function keys they want to do
- ✓ Connect with people and friends
- ✓ Take photos or videos and post them with text on a specific SNS platform
- ✓ Share posts and like them
- ✓ Check feedback and react on it
- ✓ Tag someone else, region or place
- ✓ Interpret visual contents on SNS platforms.

How B&VI interpret visual contents is different from sighted people. B&VI can only understand the pictures by text description provided technologically by each different platform. Technical methods of how blind people can use SNS will be explained in chapter 3, Customer segment study.

Year 2016, Facebook had released research result about how B&VI interact with visual contents on SNS. One part of the research explains how they connect with other people. When it comes to off line socialization of B&VI, they socialize with people more dependently on family members than friends. However, on SNS, they can socialize more independently. When they encounter problems with technologies and manipulation of devices, they tend to depend on crowd support just like sighted people (V. Voykinska, S.

Azenkot, S. Wu, G. Leshed, 2016). This means as far as physical aid is not needed, B&VI also have strong needs to connect and communicate with people via SNS which partially answers research question number one.

### 2.3.2 Challenges in SNS for B&VI

Although SNS marketing is considered to have significant influence in making WOM effect, it has generic contradictory challenges that affects all kinds of SNS users. Firstly, users of SNS could create contents or form a group freely in a platform, however the users' freedom is limited by the platform's pre-decided features. For example, users in a certain group are limited to post that they want to create and share due to in-group rules. Secondly, once the user created contents that bring more SNS users, the property rights are transferred and sometimes commodified by the companies for profits. Thirdly, some of the commercial strategy of SNS, such as offering more services to different level of users such as premium members, create social inequalities. (Mejias, 2010) Finally, there are also problems with security in personal identity safety and misuse of uploaded picture files. Personal account could be hacked, and spam attacks could be launched by hackers. (Prasad, 2014)

On top of this, there are even more challenges when B&VI use SNS. Despite the gap of accessibility for B&VI users has been narrowed over the time thanks to technology development, there are still many challenges left to them than the challenges mentioned above this paragraph.

In this section, there are examples of the challenges that B&VI face when they are on SNS. These examples are from Facebook research that was mentioned in chapter **Error! Reference source not found.**

- ✓ On browsing SNS site, B&VI encounter various links, advertisements that are interrupting original tasks that they want to do. When sighted people can simply ignore those and understand what they are for, B&VI, who only depend on screen reader, are often very confused by irrelevant and unexpected contents. It takes too long time to get through all of them and finally fulfil what they wanted to do (V. Voykinska, S. Azenkot, S. Wu, G. Leshed, 2016).

- ✓ SNS platforms have different screen design and functionality depending on which device users are interacting with. For example, Facebook mobile site(m.facebook.com) is easier to access than its main site(www.facebook.com) in terms of functionality. B&VI users have to adapt themselves to the differences they get, or they have to switch the device to do certain task on the SNS (V. Voykanska, S. Azenkot, S. Wu, G. Leshed, 2016).
- ✓ People feel more connected by posting photos and videos and receiving and giving feedbacks on the posts. It is very difficult for B&VI to interpret the visual contents unless there is a description that matches with the picture or videos uploaded. It is even more challenging editing pictures or videos by themselves. In this case, B&VI unwillingly give up doing the task or ask for help from close friends or family members. (Babu, R., Singh, R., 2013) This will also drive B&VI feel excluded or not able to follow the trend (V. Voykanska, S. Azenkot, S. Wu, G. Leshed, 2016).

#### 2.4 SNS Marketing applied for Customer Acquisition

Companies that have shown their presence and engagement in social media have benefited in more market exposure, reduced marketing expenses, increased customer traffic, brand image, financial performance, etc. It also proves 95% of customer acquisition improvement. (Twente, 2014)

Companies which already have their own strong brand awareness, use SNS marketing to enhance their brand images. For example, Dove, one of the beauty products of Unilever Ltd., launched series of SNS marketing campaign related to real beauty of women in 2014 and 2015 (Dove Choose Beautiful: Women all over the world make a choice, 2015). The cognition of beauty is not from what society decides but the way they recognize themselves and be appreciate their natural beauty. The campaign was on YouTube and Facebook. The campaigns empowered such a positive image to the brand. This strategy benefited company in two ways. First, the company was able to increase the brand power even stronger. Second, by offering people desirable image of beauty perception, the company could attract new customers. (Dove: Using Social Media for Social Viral Campaign - A Case Study, 2013)

Small & medium-sized companies and even non-profitable organizations also use SNS marketing for generating more customer traffic and new app installation which is one of the customer retaining strategies. One good example is Girl Scouts USA. They wanted to have more app downloaders for their Cookie Finder via Twitter and it boosted more than 19,500 app download as a result. (DigitalMarketingInstitute, 2018) Small & medium sized companies usually have smaller marketing budget. Thus, companies should use SNS marketing to attract interests, then make people download company app more cost efficiently.

In game industry, companies use various marketing methods or tactics also. For example, some game companies make trailers and play them in various SNS platforms before they launch new game. This makes people talk about the games and expect the games to release. Good example for this is "Angry bird". In the trailer it tells how easy and simple their games are and shows it. The app has been downloaded over 3 billion times. (Bowler, 2016, modified 2019) Sometimes they announce their launching date and reveal the tips of their new games little by little so people are more teased and by doing so, more and more people are curious about the games. Or some game companies collaborate with influencers to market their games. What type of influencers the company use and which format they will cooperate with influencers are depending on the game type or market target. For example, some of the influencers create a video to advertise games or mention games in their video. On the other hand, some of the influencers use "Let's plays" tactic. **'Let's plays'** is one of the game marketing method that draws more views and engagement. (Mediakix, 2015) Usually in the video, the screen runs the game and the influencer comments in the middle of the game. Sometimes, the game can be edited for certain level of quality. One of the famous YouTubers PewDiePie had sponsored a mobile game "Vainglory". In the video, he plays the game with his fans showing the features of the game. The video was published on 1 August 2015 and so far, it has more than 2.2 million views. (Mediakix, 2015)

Other than 'Let's plays', there are several other tactics that are efficient for same purpose.

### **Walkthroughs**

Main purpose of this tactic is to give information of the games such as how to execute side quests, how to optimize your character. In one word, same as giving a guideline to finish the game as the game progresses in the video.

### **Reaction**

People are excited about when influencers experience same contents or items as audiences go through. By giving first real reaction to certain game, it creates curiosity to people who do not know about the game. Also, it makes stronger bond to people who are already playing the game.

### **Reviews**

Not only games but also in other products, review of users gives good information whether it is worth to pay or not. Review type of video is usually done by people who already have good knowledge of the games.

### **Machinima**

Machinima is an IT term that combines machine, cinema, and animation. The term typically indicates the art genre that is created from game videos. It is created by using CG(computer graphics), game engine, or animation software. It is relatively easy and simple to make compare to real movies. (ComputerHope, 2017) (Mediakix, 2015)

Important part of the game marketing is making a buzz among people, discuss about the game and share it. Even more critical part of the game market is actually to make people download the game app, give reviews and make post-release buzz to the game.

In the next sub chapter, YouTube will be studied more where game companies put more efforts to advertise. In addition, YouTube's accessibility will be examined particularly since myTrueSound's customer segment is unique from others.

### 2.4.1 YouTube

YouTube's advertisement revenue growth is on average 57 million dollars per year as we see in the **Error! Reference source not found.** only in USA.

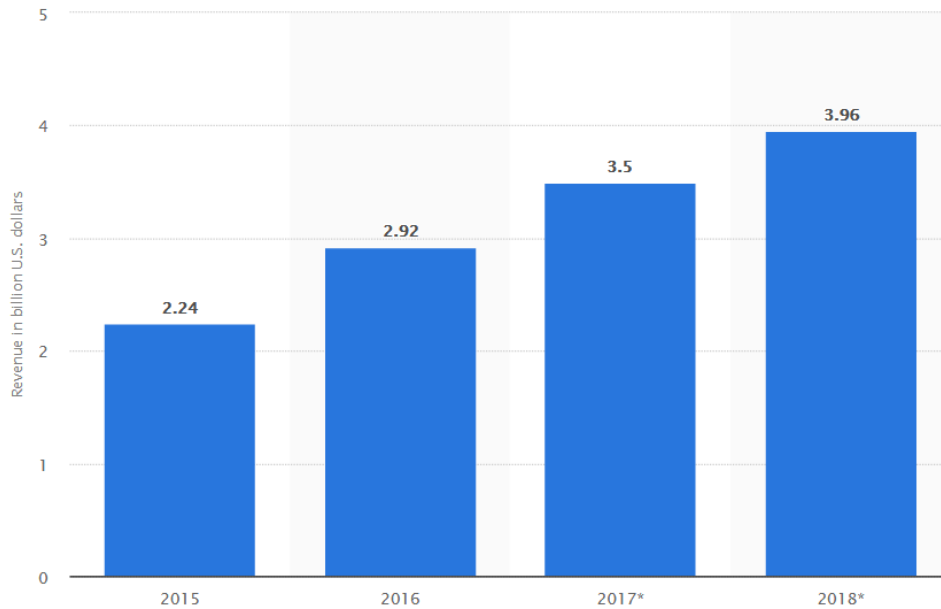


Figure 5: Net advertising revenues of YouTube in USA (Statista) – 2017 & 2018 are projected numbers

From the Figure 6 below, it is easy to recognize that YouTube is the top video focused platform and the number of active users is the second best as of 2017. Besides, the video feature of Facebook is yet to be a rival status compare to YouTube's early start. (Dogtiev, 2018)

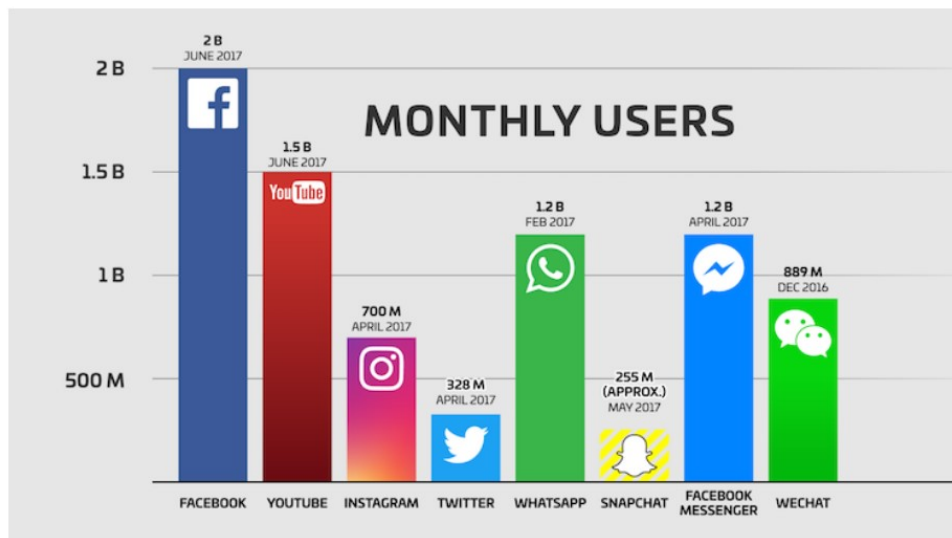


Figure 6: YouTube monthly worldwide active users vs. top social platforms(TechCrunch)

There are approximately 300 hours' worth of pure video contents uploaded every minute. (Malik, 2015, 2016 modified) Considering the amount of the video created and uploaded in YouTube, creating a right video with right content might not be the easiest thing. However, it is worth try to create video advertising for marketing purpose. Once a video goes viral, it will have a fast ripple effect not only domestically but also worldwide. Because the viewers of YouTube exist throughout from USA, European countries to Asian countries in real time as far as internet is connected.

#### 2.4.2 YouTube's accessibility

In this research, presenting YouTube's accessibility is important part due to customer segment. YouTube started from the dating website "Turn In, Hook Up" which did not attract users much. Fortunately though, their video platform technic was very sound and robust. So, the founders have changed its name as "YouTube" and used the website as a video focused user creation platform. Since then and until now, it has been a sensation in internet world. (Phrasee, 2016) It is referred as " The next step in the evolution of the internet." by Google who bought the company at 1.65 billion in October 2006. (Dickey, 2013) After YouTube had been bought by Google, they have put accessibility from the design process into their platform, and its developers understand how it affects to its product quality. (Griffin, 2015. Updated 2018) There is a statement about their mission



in Google homepage saying "Our mission is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." (Google, 1998) Matthew Schweitz, engineering manager at Google and YouTube stated about "universal accessibility" as "The organization has said that these are the priorities, so everything else will follow" at an webinar with 3PlayMedia. (Griffin, 2015. Updated 2018) Now in YouTube, users can skip advertisement with a keyboard or screen readers which was the most frustrating situation for B&VI users. (YouTube, 2018) Besides, there is caption function in YouTube which was developed for the deaf and people who have difficulties in hearing originally. The caption function gives more conveniences for B&VI. As far as there are letters, assistive tool for B&VI reads the text so they could listen to and understand the contents. Currently there are three captioning methods in YouTube. First, the creator of a video uploads the caption file. Second, a fan of certain video can submit the caption file to the original video creator for approval. After the caption is approved by the video creator, it is inserted into the video. Third, YouTube offers auto-generated captions via automatic speech recognition software which offers caption to all videos in YouTube by default. Auto-generated captions has 70% accuracy in captioning, so this wouldn't be the best option for B&VI. (Griffin, 2015. Updated 2018) However, this will help them a lot in terms of accessibility since screen reader will read the captions to them to understand the contents without any exclusion in YouTube. This will help the company in many ways to consider myTrueSound's market strategy accessibly.

## 3 CUSTOMER SEGMENT STUDY

### 3.1 Life of B&VI and aiding tools

#### 3.1.1 Generic life of B&VI

Approximately, there are 253 million visually impaired people worldwide including 36 million blinds. (WHO, 2017) People who are born blind can have various medical reasons behind. Some people lose their visions as they are getting older. Some people lose their vision due to health condition or accidents. It is impossible to list the reasons of losing visions all here. However, exploring some of the practical implications of being blind is to have a better understanding about the customer segment and to well exploit the knowledge to myTrueSound Oy's marketing practice with all the respect.

WHO says human being's vision is categorised broadly into 4 levels by the International Classification of Diseases revision 10.

- Normal vision
- Moderate vision impairment
- Severe vision impairment
- Blindness

Again, from the level "moderate vision impairment" to "blindness" are considered as vision impairment (WHO, 2017).

Many people might feel puzzled to imagine a life without vision. It is because every aspect of life is decided and acted upon our vision such as accessing to information, basic functions of daily life, social engagement, education etc.

Hereunder, there are some pictures and descriptions that show little part about the life of B&VI. Those will help to understand how B&VI undertake daily chores at least a little bit. Most of the pictures are capture images from Youtube videos. They are from blind organizations and individual blind youtubers posted for various reasons. Many Youtube users follow them whether they are blind or not.

Example 1. When B&VI cook.



Picture 1: A blind person cooking <Images from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

When this man cook, he has to identify the type of food, location of tools, temperature of the food etc., using his senses such as smell and touch than visual sense. He has to remember cooking time according to his preferences and how to operate cooking tools. The picture shows that the blind person is touching french fries to see how well they are cooked and touching a bun to find out its location to put a burger pattie.

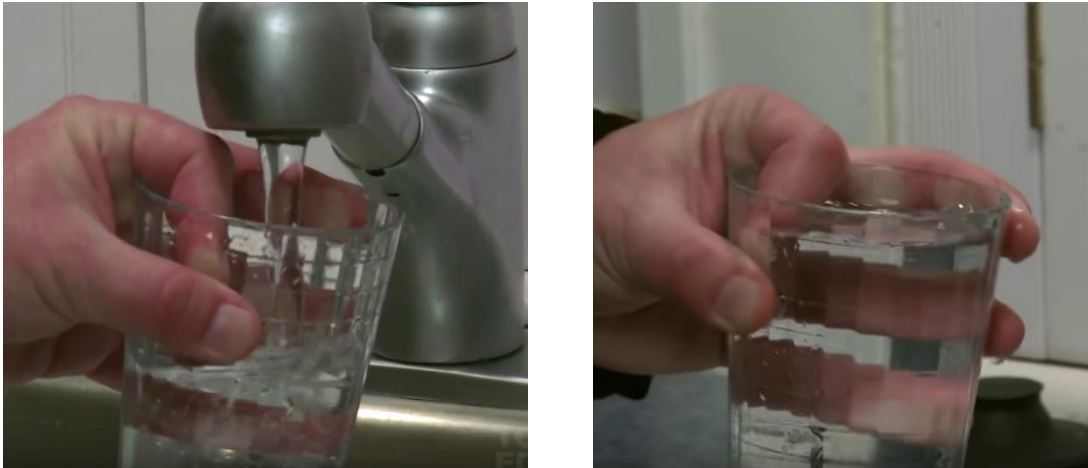
Example 2. A blind person is looking for a book.



Picture 2: A blind person is looking for a book in the bookshelf. < Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

B&VI also listen to music and movies. To find out the location of CDs, DVDs and books, every item must be in order as they remember. This person in the picture explains that putting the items in alphabetical order definitely helps him finding them easily. Often different surface material or package helps to recognize items easier.

#### Example 3. Getting tap water



Picture 3: A blind person takes tap water.< Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

Doing things without vision requires more attention for B&VI than sighted people. The person has to put his finger into the glass to identify the height of the water in the glass so the water does not overflow nor drop on the floor.

#### Example 4. A blind person traveling.



Picture 4: A blind person is traveling by himself. .< Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

When B&VI travel, they often have to ask for help in finding ticketing desks, checking in, finding the gate, finding the seat etc. The picture on the right shows that the blind person is identifying the hotel room by touching braille signal under the room number sign.

### 3.1.2 Aiding tools for B&VI

As B&VI people seen on the street, most of them have white canes made of light metal to avoid obstacles in the path and to recognize the orientation marks. The white cane also invokes people's understanding and recognition. (McCallum, 2015) Some blind people use guiding dogs. Unlike people's misconception, guiding dogs do not direct the blind people. They are helping aids for safe travel such as helping B&VI go through the crowd, notify stairs or curbs by stopping before. They are highly trained with special purpose however, the dogs also need care, proper amount of exercise, groomed, fed just like any other dogs living with sighted people (VisionAware, 2018).

There are some pictures help understanding B&VI's white cane and guiding dog here under.



Picture 5: Supporting method for the blind(white cane & bar, guiding dog)  
<Images from Lighthouse Guild in YouTube>

As technology develops, more and more B&VI use aiding apps on their phone. To list a few apps for them are as below.

- ✓ **Be My Eyes:** Sighted people volunteer and the blind call in the app. Whoever is available, the audio-video connects both phones and the blind get any kind of information they need. (Scherffius, 2018)



Picture 6: : Be My Eyes app and its introduction<Image from iTunes app store>

- ✓ **LookTel Money Reader:** Identifies the currency so blind people can count money and use money properly. (Scherffius, 2018)



Picture 7: LookTell Money Reader app and its screen<Image from iTunes app store>

- ✓ **TapTapSee:** It identifies the object on the camera. (Scherffius, 2018)



Picture 8: TapTapSee app and its screen < Images from iTunes app store >

It is impossible to know and understand B&VI's life fully only with some pictures and short explanations. However, trying to understand the customer segment is exceptionally important especially in this unique customer segment.

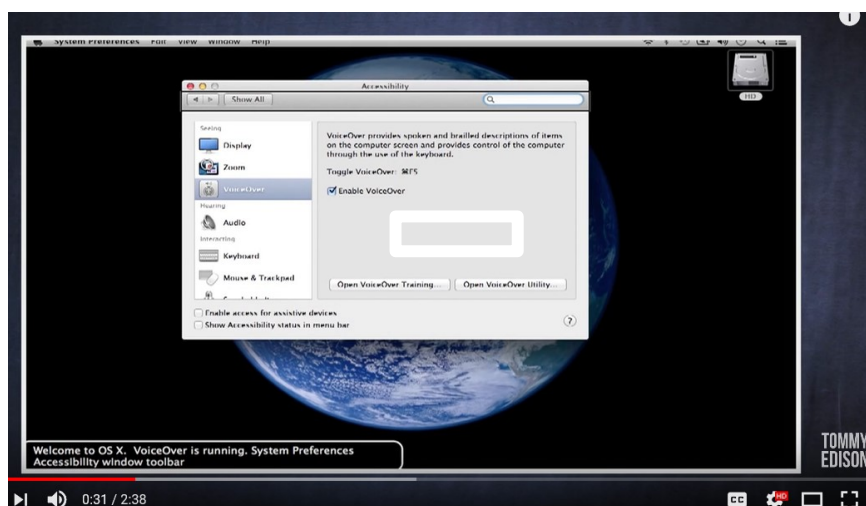


In chapter 3.1.3 Adaptation to new technologies of B&VI, our research presents images and descriptions on how B&VI use computers and mobile phones with built-in accessibility features. This chapter will give more details of research questions number two.

### 3.1.3 Adaptation to new technologies of B&VI

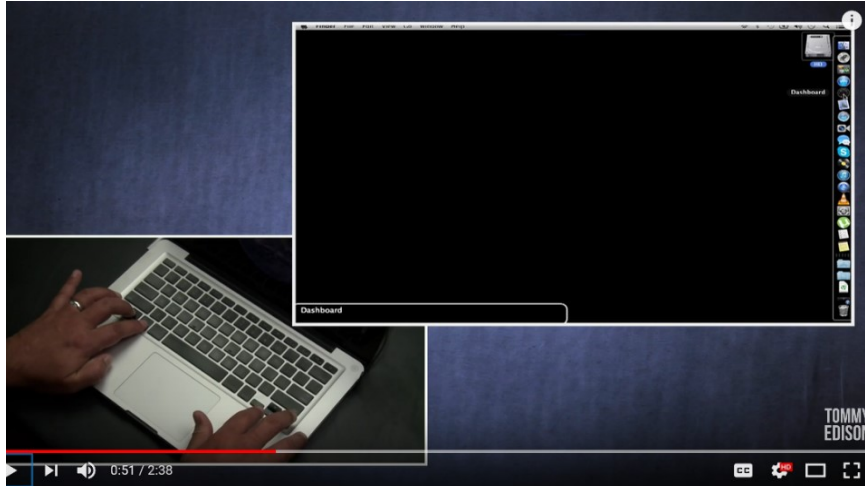
Not every B&VI is born blind. People who lost their sight due to certain accidents or medical reasons tend to maintain their habits of using technologies such as mobile phones, PlayStation, computers, laptops etc. Some even play video games despite they have lost their sight completely or partially. People who are born blind still use devices that offer accessibility. The way B&VI uses those devices are different from sighted people. The difference will be presented as capture images below with explanation. The main reason B&VI are able to use those technology is thanks to the companies that develop built-in accessibility operation systems such as Mac and Microsoft. For B&VI, it only depends on whichever system they prefer to use.

#### Example 1. Blind person using a MacBook



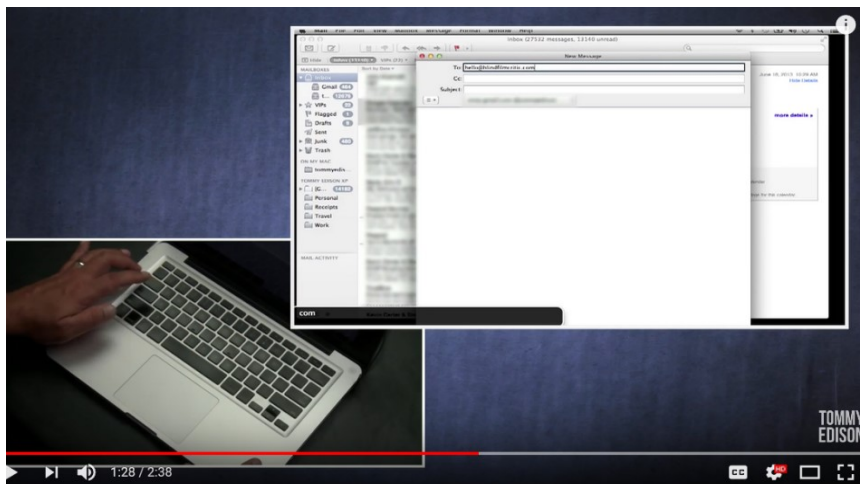
Picture 9: Computer screen when a blind person turns on built-in accessibility system <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

When B&VI use the computer, the first thing they have to do is to turn on the VoiceOver that reads the screen to the users. If the person has a limited sight, he or she can use the magnifying app instead of screen reader.



Picture 10: A blind person choosing an app. <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

As the blind person moves the arrow keys on the keyboard, the VoiceOver reads each app, then he can choose which apps to use.



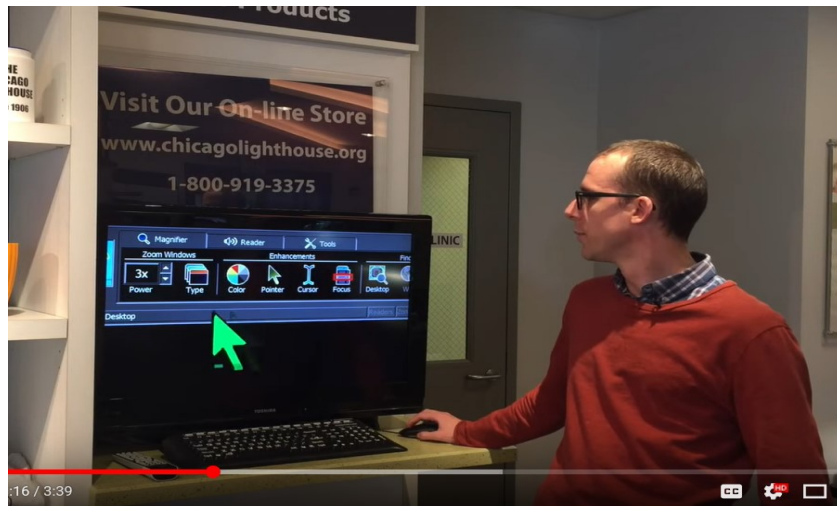
Picture 11: A blind person writing an email on Mac <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

When certain app is on, the computer reads all the text on the screen, the user should listen to it and choose the task the user wants to do. When the user types letters, the



VoiceOver also reads the texts written so the writer can make sure the words are correct. If the user is complete blind, he or she does not even need the computer monitor.

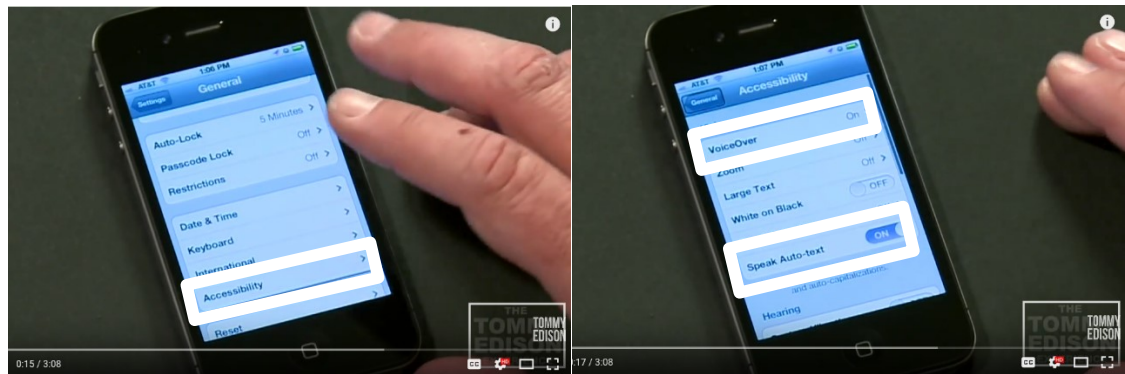
### Example 2. A man shows how to use magnifying software in computer



Picture 12: Magnified screen <Image from The Chicago Lighthouse on YouTube>

Some of B&VI are able to see if the font or picture is very large within a short distance. If it is the case, they use the zoom function to operate the computer.

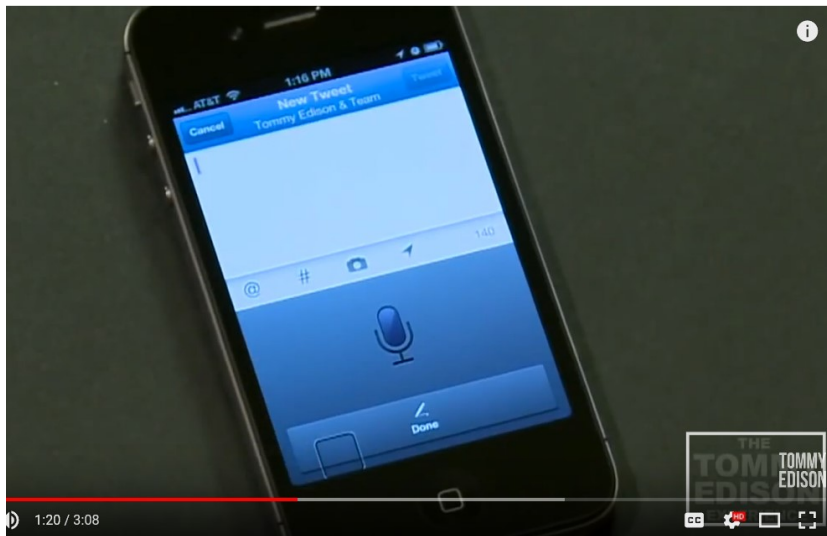
### Example 3. Blind person using iPhone



Picture 13: iPhone screen that VoiceOver is on. <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

Mobile phones have accessibility built-in functions by default. The accessibility is activated by changing the setting of the phone like the white boxes in Picture 13.

iPhone also offers VoiceOver just like Mac book. B&VI users can choose accessibility in the setting menu and turn on VoiceOver.



Picture 14: A blind person tweeting using iPhone. <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

Depending on which level SNS platforms offer accessibility, blind users can post texts or photos using the phone's or the computer's mike and camera.



Picture 15: A blind person navigating iPhone <Image from Tommy Edison Experience channel from YouTube>

A blind person can navigate apps on their phone scrolling or touching their fingers on the screen just like sighted people. As the finger touches apps on the screen, the phone reads through them.

Above mentioned examples cannot give the entire idea about B&VI's adaptation to new technologies. However, it is important to know that B&VI use technologies and the technology improves over the time slowly but surely making life easier for minority groups. That also means B&VI groups have potential to be an important customer target groups for companies not only the tools related to their blindness but also in other sectors.

Next examples are presenting about B&VI playing video games.

#### Example 4. B&VI playing video games



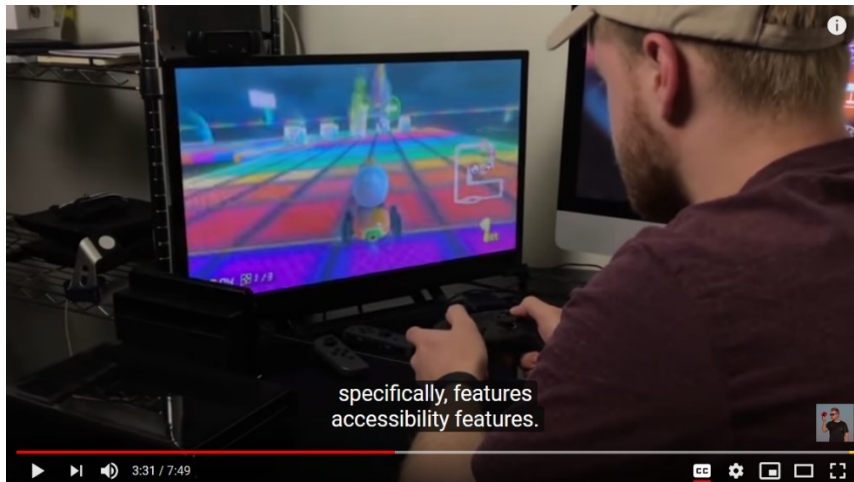
Picture 16: Assist mode of video game<Image form James Rath channel on YouTube>

The game example is Mario 8 Kart Deluxe, the game allows to change to assist mode for B&VI players. The assist mode helps B&VI players by giving tip such as whether the player is going to the right direction or what kind of items the player should get at some stage.



Picture 17: Different screen colour mode setting<Image from James Rath channel on YouTube>

Picture 17 shows B&VI who have little sense of vision can apply different mode to help getting better views of video games.



Picture 18: B&VI playing video game<Image form James Rath channel on YouTube>

For B&VI players little features such as auto steering, smart steering and auto accelerate help them to play video games. Example 4 shows how technology can help narrowing the gap between what B&VI can do and cannot do.

### 3.2 Customer segment analysis

Customer segmentation is the optimal way to gain competitive situation for a company by understanding heterogeneity of consumer needs since mass production era. (Wedel, Kamakura, 2012)

In October 2017, myTrueSound Oy had implemented a survey regarding its market analysis. There were 186 participants and among them 182 people had vision impairment. The survey was done in English and Spanish. The English version of survey was done in international B&VI's online forum "Blind" which is a sub forum of "Reddit". Spanish version of survey was done in Spanish blind group on Facebook. The most relevant answers to this thesis are in below. It shows 98.9% respondents would like to play mobile games that are "accessible". 33.9% of B&VI people want to play games every day as far as they are high quality and accessible. Among them, 85 (45.7%) replied

they do not care how much does the game cost. The survey result shows that B&VI have high demand on high quality games where as in reality, there are not many audio games that satisfy their needs (Swarts, 2016)

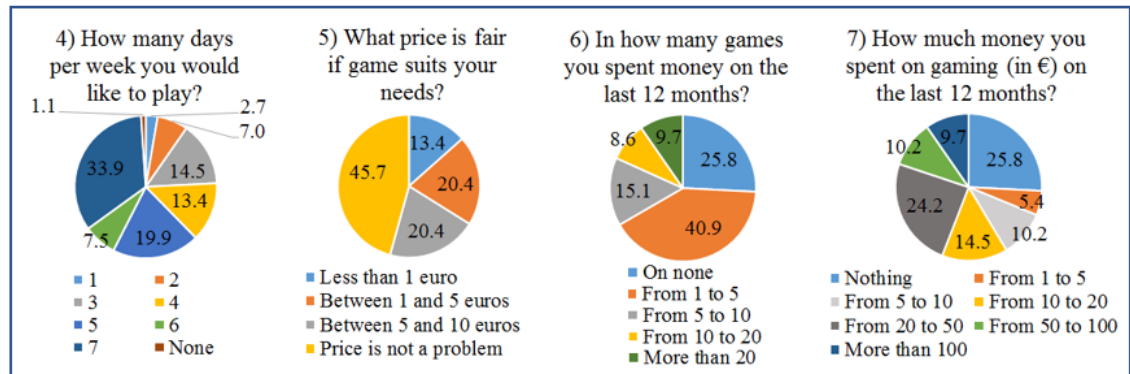


Figure 7: Survey result of myTrueSound Oy about habits on mobile gaming among B&VI

### 3.3 Competitors

myTrueSound Oy has also analysed competitors that develop games for B&VI. Most games for B&VI are simple games such as bowling, shooting the target, etc. There are some of the games so called 3D audio games. 3D sound provides users to experience immersive audio quality. Thus, it gives the users intuition when they play games. However, the games in the app store are not actually 3D audio games since they mostly rely on binaural way which offers the effect of hearing with two ears. Thus, the sound of the games is not immersive nor intuitive to the game players. Meanwhile, there are a few games that are popular regardless whether the players are blind or not. For example, "Blind Legend" is an audio game with little bit of visual effects. It has 500,000 downloads so far and currently 3rd version has developed and sold in app store with 4.4 review stars. (Google Play, 2018)

Unlike its competitors, myTrueSound has eliminated any visual effect to the game so both game developers and B&VI players can focus on sound quality with attracting storyline in series.



## 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Introduction

In this research, data were collected both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data were collected to understand B&VI's customer segment and challenges in SNS usage. Quantitative data supported sorting the best accessible SNS platform and gave insight about potential marketing strategy.

The thesis uses four different sources of primary data. They are collected through survey, interview, observation and comparison. To collect the primary data of how B&VI are familiar with and usage level of SNS, survey was implemented. The survey was tested by one of the B&VI interviewees for its accessibility. To find out the challenges on SNS platforms and their preferable marketing channel, three interviews are conducted. These data are used along with some of the survey results. Observation and comparison numeric data are used to investigate and support the hypothesis about possible SNS platform for planning myTrueSound's marketing strategy.

Secondary data are also presented with regards to market possibility for B&VI segment. Part of myTrueSound's own survey is used as a complement in this thesis.

### 4.2 Primary data

#### **Survey**

Understanding B&VI's experiences on each SNS platforms is an important element in order to find out the most accessible SNS platforms. The survey questions were designed at first to know the degree of accessibility of each SNS platforms and the frequency of using them with additional questions related to game experiences. The surveys were through Webropol with multiple choice questions and in google with simpler questions but with larger number of questions. However, complicated electronic survey questions were an obstacle to the data collection. They were not easy to answer for B&VI. In case of Webropol survey, it was unimaginable how they would understand the way to answer by only hearing the survey questions. Thus, the survey questions on

Webropol was used when I could support the data collection process at the place of collection by asking questions in person and input the answer from B&VI participants.

Consequently, the survey was redesigned in google form. The questionnaire had to be short and simple enough. There should not be mixed questions since complicated multi-question means dropping the survey participation. A pilot survey was implemented in order to check accessibility. The language of both surveys was English.

Initially, the survey was published in one of the biggest B&VI's online forum "Blind" which is a sub forum of "Reddit" and 3 blind organizations based in Finland. The survey answers were collected for 3 weeks. In Turku area, the survey participation request was specially designed by the service director at Varsinais-Suomen Näkövammaiset ry. However, motivating B&VI to participate in the survey was not an easy task. There were only 3 response from Turku region. The google survey was again modified after the interviews to lessen the burden on the participants and to focus more on core questions. Since the language of the survey was in English, any B&VI in English speaking countries could be possible targets. In addition, game industry is not limited in a single country, to know the situations of various countries could benefit more to the company. Hence, the new survey was distributed to the lists of organizations in other countries as presented in the following Table 2. With regards to the South Korean organization, email and survey questions were translated in Korean by the researcher who is a native Korean.

Table 2: The list of blind organizations to whom the survey link was sent

<b>Name of the organization</b>	<b>Country</b>
• <b>Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired</b>	Finland
• <b>The Federation of Swedish Speaking Visually Impaired in Finland</b>	Finland
• <b>Valteri</b>	Finland
• <b>Visually Impaired Children Association</b>	Finland
• <b>Siloam blinds' association</b>	South Korea
• <b>The Curing Retinal Blindness Foundation</b>	USA
• <b>National Federation of the Blind</b>	USA
• <b>Edith Bushel Centre</b>	USA
• <b>Hadley Public Schools</b>	USA
• <b>Royal National Institute of Blind People</b>	UK
• <b>Blind Sports Australia</b>	Australia

• <b>Independent Living Centres Australia (ILCA)</b>	Australia
• <b>Blind Citizens Australia</b>	Australia
• <b>Vision Australia</b>	Australia
• <b>Blind Organization of India</b>	India
• <b>Sightsavers</b>	India
• <b>Blind</b>	International

Even though the survey link was spread in several different countries this time, only one organization among above had a question about which method the survey result will be published. The survey participation rates from above organizations were zero.

In Turku area, there are courses for B&VI, for example courses related to language or sports. When there was a language course at Varsinais-Näkövammaiset Ry in Turku, the survey was administered directly to the members. However, the average age of B&VI in language circle in Turku was too old aged to use internet in their daily life. Thus, the survey questions were not applicable for many B&VI members in the language course. Only two were able to answer to the survey. Additionally, when there was a sports camp for young B&VI aged from 11 to 25 at Näkövammaisten liitto Ry in Helsinki, the survey was implemented by the researcher at the camp towards 5 volunteers. At the sports camp, one staff helping B&VI participants introduced "Valteri" which is the biggest school for disabled. When an email asking for cooperation was sent, the reply arrived immediately with positive answer. At this point, the survey was translated into Finnish language by a native Finnish, so that the reluctance to join the survey due to language barrier could be eliminated. However, nobody from "Valteri" participated to the survey.

At this point of research process only 10 results were obtained. B&VI groups targeting for the survey are searched and the survey was implemented in Facebook groups such as Assistive Technology Community for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Blind and Visual Impaired Android Users, Accessibility for the blind and V.I.P.S(Visually Impaired People's Support). Only Assistive Technology Community for the Blind and Visually Impaired was actively exchanging the feedback and asking questions about the survey. Again, due to the group members' feedback, the survey questions were modified and reposted. Rest of the groups were not interested in the survey and some of those groups were not active already. From Facebook groups, 21 B&VI answered the survey. The time invested for the survey was about 5 months.



## Interview

With most simplified survey questions, there was a limit to gather various opinions about accessibility and details on difficulties they go through on SNS platforms. Thus, research interview was inevitable data to collect overcome the problem. To find people to interview emails were sent to Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired, The Federation of Swedish Speaking Visually Impaired in Finland, and Visually Impaired Children Association. Only one of three organizations introduced me a contact in Turku area from Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired (Varsinais-Suomen Näkövammaiset Ry). The contact person in Turku generously made several phone calls and sent emails to their members to ask for joining the interview. A couple of weeks later, there were two volunteers from Turku region. Since the two of the final interviewees were underage as 17 years old, the letter of consent for the thesis interview had to be signed from both interviewees and their parents. The questions for the interview was sent with the letter of consent so they could already check the possibility to answer to the interview questions. As my own Finnish language level is not proper to make an interview, one native Finnish translator helped the interpretation. The whole interviews were recorded in audio file for accuracy. The two interviewees are examples of non-probability sampling because they are in the suitable age range who are assumed to use technologies and play mobile games.

The last interview was implemented over the phone due to distance and interviewee's time management factors. However, the interview was not recorded by voice but in written. Since the interviewee was good at English, the language for the interview was English. The last interviewee was also a good example of non-probability sampling since he, 43 years old, plays games and very good at manipulating technologies. However, he did not want to generalize his experience on SNS platform because he is already active on SNS platforms and used to them compare to average B&VI according to his comment.

All the interviewees wanted to stay anonymous. Therefore, the names of the interviewees are changed to John, Tom and Henri. The interviews were necessary to gather various opinions about accessibility. Also, they helped finding out details on difficulties B&VI go through on SNS platforms and some idea about preferable SNS platforms.

## **Observation**

As an additional source of primary data was collected from B&VI online forum "Blind" which is a sub-forum of 'Reddit'. The sub-forum "Blind" has 5,600 subscribers as of April 2019 mixed with B&VI and sighted people. The contents of the posting were studied between April to November 2018 by observing which topics are most discussed and the way uses communicate. On this forum, data were collected by using SNS platforms' names as search words such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram. The numbers of each SNS name mentioned within the search period mean how much B&VI people are interested in the platform or how often they use it. The result of this study is also in the following chapter.

## **Comparison**

Yet another source of primary data was to track and compare the number of followers of famous B&VI YouTubers. The comparative SNS platforms of famous YouTubers' were decided as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. The number of each SNS platform's followers were presented in the form of table and chart. This shows which SNS platform is more popular and useful to the followers who are considered to have higher population of B&VI among them.

### 4.3 Secondary data

To analyse the customer segment and market possibility, quantitative method was used. myTrueSound Oy's own market analysis survey has been used to show the customer behaviour analysis and market possibility. With this survey questions, myTrueSound Oy was able to collect data that gives insight about the customer segment and opinions from B&VI. It was also proved from the whole process of survey that B&VI are active online and communication method is not very different from sighted people regarding online situation.

## 5 SNS PLATFORMS FOR myTrueSound

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present myTrueSound's customer segment and characteristics of their communication by observation from online forum. This will answer to the research question one; **how do B&VI use SNS to connect and communicate with each other.** Their experience on SNS platform based on the data gathered via interview, survey and observation are analysed to answer research question two; **how do B&VI experiences SNS marketing.** Finally, numeric data through comparison will give a clear picture of which SNS platform could be used. Also, details for myTrueSound's potential marketing strategy will be presented to answer research question three; **which SNS platform(s) should be chosen and how the SNS marketing strategy should be planned to attract the customer segment.**

### 5.2 Uniqueness of Customer Base

There are companies such as “Fashionable canes” ([www.fashionablecanes.com](http://www.fashionablecanes.com)) and Orcam([www.orcam.com](http://www.orcam.com)) which have the possibility to market their products and services to blind organizations and related personals such as their family members, care takers, and hospitals. For these companies, B&VI are only a sub-category among their customer base. The marketing strategies of these companies are quite similar to any other companies.

The challenge for myTrueSound is that the primary target is B&VI. To meet the target customer segment's needs, the accessibility should put into the first-place whichever marketing strategy the company will use, not to mention the product quality.

A critical problem for B&VI is to be confronted to marketing contents with visual elements. B&VI are much bothered from advertisements that appear capriciously and unexpectedly while they are on SNS platforms. For example, considering how most of the marketing works visually, understanding or receiving and interpreting the data that B&VI encounter will impose too much burden to them. Even with technical support for the visual contents,

B&VI who only depend on hearing sense still feel frustration by the quantity of advertisement. Many times, accessing to marketing content is not available to B&VI in case accessibility is not considered before publishing marketing contents. For this reason, B&VI prefer certain type of advertisements such as email and video ads that give the clue about product or service and give them choice to check the ads or not. Next chapter presents details in challenges for B&VI on SNS based on interviews.

### 5.3 Observation of B&VI's communication from online forum

From the beginning of working for myTrueSound Oy, "Blind" has been the best information source for customer segment study. Since "Blind" is not a sub forum aiming to share certain hobby or limited topic, any posts related to B&VI were recorded. The huge number of postings in "Blind" gave some insight to this customer segment. Observation term of "Blind" was about 8 months consecutively. There are 4 interesting aspects observed in sub-forum "Blind" in Reddit. They are presented as below;

- ✓ First, when there is a post mentioning about a video on YouTube without visual image but only sound, the total number of views to the video is very low which is a natural matter considering
- ✓ YouTube is a video based social networking service platform. However, if the video is created by B&VI, the response rate to the video is high in the "Blind" compare to the low number of views in YouTube. The contents of the video are from various musical piece creation to music performance. The number of comments in the post and voting number explains how much they are interested in the video.
- ✓ Second, B&VI are showing different interest rates to research purpose posts from asking technical feedback from developers. B&VI show more interests to the latter. This is also identified by the voting system, number of comments, and click rates of the posts in the forum.
- ✓ Third, it was also noticed that B&VI are sharing information about the life of B&VI, news, technologies, policies related to blindness, questions about products in need and products they like to share. Some people promote their own creation

such as apps, music, YouTube video(sound only). The reactions to those postings are mostly compliments or encouragement.

- ✓ Fourth, it is also noticed that people in the forum are showing a lot of interests in posts asking for help about B&VI life. For example, information about a family member who is going to lose their sight and how to help or deal with it.

"Blind" is a sub-forum that is not for people's hobby or interest, nor for certain purpose other than to share their life. Acknowledging there can be so many things happen in daily life, the topics of the forum does not seem to be diverse enough. It appears people are sharing what is the most relevant or urgent to their life style and needs.

#### 5.4 Challenges for B&VI on SNS

To find out what kind of challenges B&VI experience SNS platforms, three interviews were made. All the interviewees are males. John and Tom are 17-year-old boys who reside in Turku area and Henry is 43 years old from Helsinki. The interviewees' names are used under pseudonym under agreement. Most of the interview answers the research questions number two: **how do B&VI experience SNS marketing?**

When the question **'Which aspects of SNS platforms disturb you to stay active?'** was asked, the answers were as below;

- ✓ "SNS platforms' websites are poorly designed to B&VI." (John, 2018)
- ✓ "Sometimes my phone cannot operate all the features of SNS platforms, so they are not even adaptable to my phone." (Tom, 2018)

It was found from this research survey result that B&VI are on SNS frequently. However, advertisements on SNS platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are the worst experiences that B&VI could go through when they are online.

Question **'How would you recommend SNS to be more accessible?'** was asked in the interview, the answers came as below;

- ✓ "When you scroll down with your finger, there should not be any ads or links, because they are disturbing so much." (John, 2018)

- ✓ "SNS platforms should move all the links and ads to the bottom of the screen so we can decide if we want to go through them or not." (John, 2018)
- ✓ "The screen should be divided into chapters so that not everything is in the same place." (Tom, 2018)
- ✓ "Photos and videos should be located on the side of the screen, not in the middle." (Tom, 2018)

Should SNS platforms apply how B&VI want SNS to be, to be more accessible, there are high chances that no advertisement or link is clicked by neither B&VI nor by sighted users. Consequently, that would make companies' efforts to be exposed to potential customers go in vain. It means SNS platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram might not be the best SNS platform for acquiring new customers at least in B&VI customer segment. As it is mentioned in the Table 1 Social Media Tools and Their objectives in chapter 2 SNS Marketing, Facebook and Instagram are powerful tools for advertisement. Twitter is a strong way to engage with customers by generating discussions. However, as the interview shows it is not true whether those objectives of each SNS platforms can be applied to B&VI segment likewise.

In addition, from the interview, people mentioned about email, text message and YouTube video as preferable advertising media. In case of email, it gives a person a choice if he or she wants to check the emails or links in the emails depending on their interests or mood. Besides, features of email are easy to use such as mailing list and creating a new email. Text message is easy to search back even though the conversation has happened long ago. Since the text is still left in the messenger apps. (Henri, 2018) (John, 2018) (Tom, 2018) However, for the scope of this research, email and text message will not be studied as company's potential marketing method.

As all interviewees agreed, it is very easy to understand the contents for B&VI when there is sound. For example, all interviewees talked about YouTube advertisement. The advertisement which explains about the product with voice or sound are easy to understand and more accessible. Thus, YouTube advertisements are more accessible for B&VI according to John (2018).

- ✓ "On YouTube, it is easy to navigate the menu, to find function keys and its channels are easy to subscribe. Captions in the video give better accessibility to B&VI."

Hence, in the next sub chapter, YouTube will be examined in detail as a potential marketing SNS platform for the case company.

### 5.5 YouTube as a potential SNS platform

From the interview, YouTube was mentioned by all interviewees. The words people use reflect what they are interested in. Hence to see some trends in B&VI segment, it is reasonable to compare how many times the number of each SNS platforms were mentioned.

For this comparison, "Reddit"([www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)) was chosen as the target platform. "Reddit" is USA based internet news aggregation website. Members of this platform share their hobbies such as sports, games, TV series, news, life stories and so on in the sub-categorized forums. The topics of post of Reddit is almost limitless. It also has comment and vote system. People can vote for interesting postings, so the most voted post is shown on the top of the page of each sub forum. (Reddit, 2005) Especially, it contains one of the biggest B&VI's forum called "Blind". The number of subscribers of "Blind" is 5,600 as of April 2019. For comparison, the search condition was set as "Posts from all time" and "relevance" as of 10 December 2018 in the sub forum "Blind". The name of SNS platforms must be mentioned either in the title or in the posted contents. As a result, Facebook was mentioned 53, YouTube 97, Twitter 69, and Instagram 11 times each in total as it is seen in the **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

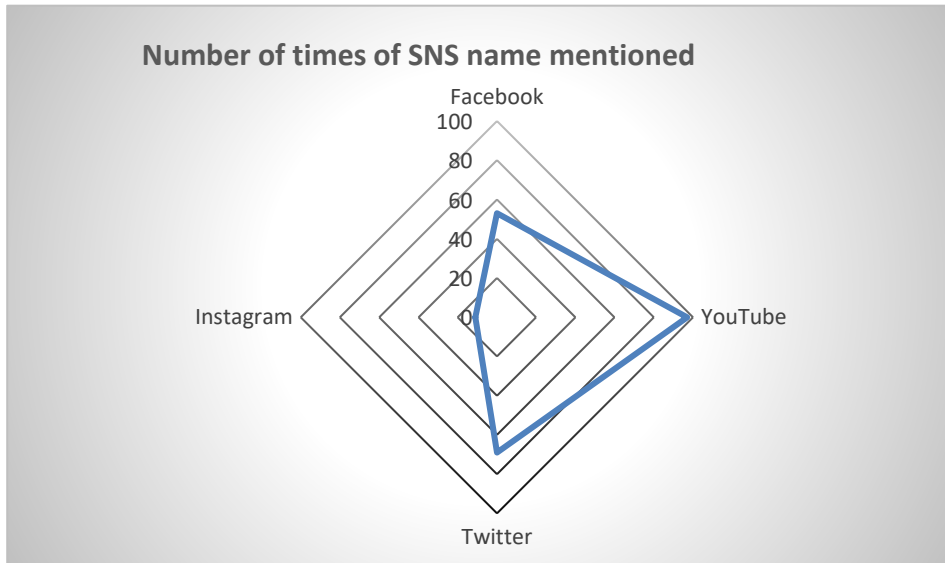


Figure 7: Number of times of each SNS name mentioned<Youngim Gwock>

At the same time, to support the idea of how much B&VI people are involved in SNS, famous B&VI figures were searched and decided. There are 3 famous B&VI figures on SNS platforms, Tommy Edison, Molly Burke and James Rath. Each of them has accounts from at least four common SNS platforms as in the **Error! Reference source not found.** The numbers of the followers of common SNS platforms are compared in the table and chart as below.

Table 3: Number of followers of famous B&VI YouTubers on each different SNS platform

As of 16 November, 2018	Tommy Edison	Molly Burke	James Rath
<b>Facebook</b>	19,304	28,418	856
<b>YouTube</b>	613,159	1,476,022	19,399
<b>Instagram</b>	13,400	515,000	2006
<b>Twitter</b>	32,600	51,600	10,300



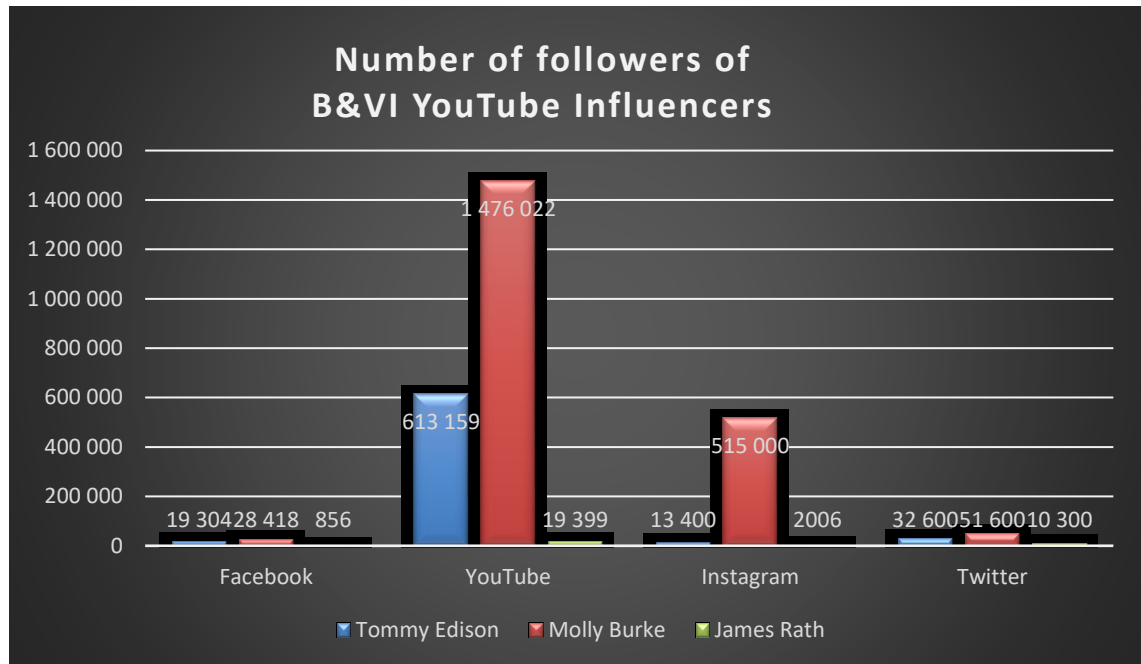


Figure 8: Number of followers of famous B&VI YouTubers. <Youngim Gwock>

As shown in the **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.**, every famous B&VI influencer have the highest number of followers from their YouTube channel. The followers of those influencers are not all necessarily B&VI. However, it is seen on the comment of YouTube videos that B&VI audiences are more active with these YouTube influencers meaning higher B&VI population among the followers.

As it was introduced in 2.4 SNS Marketing applied for Customer Acquisition, there are several marketing video tactics. The format of the marketing video can be decided by company from one of those tactics according to the situation. For example, for new release, myTrueSound could produce collaboration video with B&VI YouTube influencers to make marketing video or create a video using "Let's plays" tactic. After releasing games, "Review", "Walkthrough" or also "Let's plays" tactic can be used.

Since the company released a game that has no visual effect, at least marketing purpose video must have visual aspect to maximize the WOM regardless whether its target customers are blind or not. Because where people make a big buzz about, there are certainly sighted people's roles in it. In many videos related to B&VI, there are always sighted followers who can easily spread WOM phenomenon to their friends and among other followers. Additionally, with more B&VI population among the followers, it can be

said that there is high possibility that the game product can be exposed the customer segment. Not to mention again, making a visual marketing video with the best accessibility is very important not to exclude the target customer segment.

## 5.6 Facebook as a complementary SNS platform

The survey shows that Facebook ranks the highest in every aspect of accessibility. This aspect was introduced in chapter 2.2.1 Accessibility & Connectivity. The result is presented in the **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

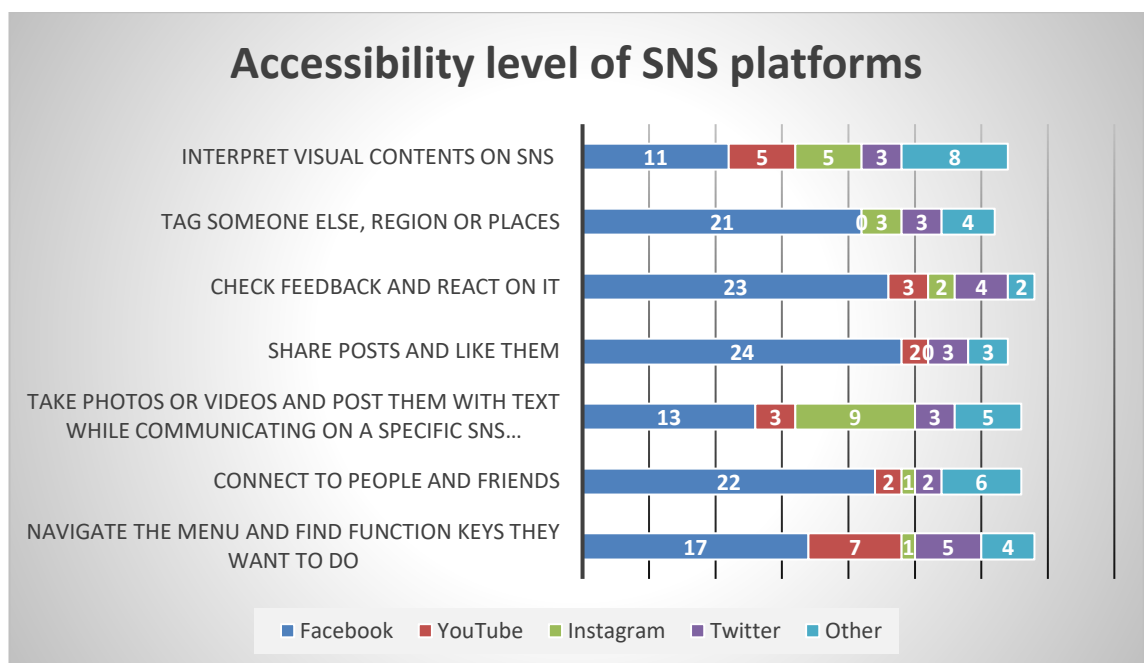


Figure 9: Accessibility levels of each SNS platforms <Youngim Gwock>

To make a buzz about a posting on SNS platform, functions like 'tag someone else or region', 'check feedback and react on it' and 'share posts and like them' will do proper job than functions such as 'interpret visual contents on SNS'.

As introduced in the Table 1. Social Media Tools and Their Objectives in chapter 2.1 SNS Marketing, Facebook will be efficient for 'Advertising', 'Developing a community' and 'Targeting specific audiences'. However, pop-up advertisement will not be as efficient as myTrueSound expects in B&VI customer segment. Instead of promoting the product

through pop-up ads in the Facebook, it is wiser to induce followers from YouTube channel to Facebook page. From there, people who are interested in the games and myTrouSound Oy could share information, bring questions about games, get the news for the product and invite their friends or family. Facebook will be well exploited to make pre or post buzz and continuously communicating with its customer segment.

## 6 CONCLUSION

With regards to the research question number one, *how do B&VI use SNS to connect and communicate with each other*, the data gathered in this thesis shows B&VI are active online on various SNS platforms. They wish to connect with people and be involved in the community when they are online. They share information and provide help to each other when they can. Also, they do not hesitate to ask for help through the SNS platforms when there are needs. With technology development, accessibility to SNS platforms for B&VI is continuously improving.

In relation to research question number two, *how do B&VI experience SNS marketing*, unlike sighted people, B&VI experience tough challenges when they are on SNS platforms. They are constantly irritated by marketing purpose links, photos without descriptions, complicated screen designs for assistant tools to figure out etc. Thus, planning the marketing strategy by using typical tactics, such as pop-up ads or banner ads, will not be beneficial to the company. Instead, the company should consider establishing a marketing channel based on more accessible mediums for B&VI such as email, text message or YouTube videos.

Moreover, considering the scope of this thesis and the importance of WOM effect of SNS, YouTube seems to be the most interesting platform for myTrueSound to put its marketing efforts. As it was shown by the quantitative data on famous B&VI YouTube influencers' followers, there is a higher percentage of B&VI populations among followers when the YouTube influencer is B&VI. This finding helps answering to the research question number three, *which SNS platform(s) should be chosen and how the SNS marketing strategy should be planned to attract the customer segment*.

To best utilize SNS marketing via YouTube, the company should have their own channel. Through the channel, the company can offer information such as how to control their audio games, stories behind game characters etc. Then, producing collaboration video with B&VI YouTube influencers will bring more viewers and possible customers to the company. Using one of the YouTube game marketing tactics will be a help. For example, YouTube influencer plays the game with their fans who are sighted, and they compete against each other. Since their game has no visual effect, the sighted players should only use their listening sense just like B&VI. This is one of the tactics called "Let's plays" presented in chapter 2.4. Another example, since the game has only sound effect,

many players might be startled and wonder how to clear each stage. When the collaboration video with B&VI influencers induces a customer base increase, myTrueSound can publish informative videos in its YouTube channel. For example, publishing clues to how to clear each stage might draw customers as well as make a buzz about the game. This tactic is called "Walkthrough" presented in chapter 2.4.

In this stage, the company can also utilize the company Facebook page for more buzz as a complementary channel because it is the best accessible SNS platform for B&VI. YouTube has its own "subscription" system just like "follow" system from Facebook. Once myTrueSound's YouTube channel has subscribers, whenever the company creates a new video, every subscriber will automatically receive a 'notice' from YouTube. This will make the company's marketing activity more efficient. Adding to this, it is advised to keep the sound quality of the games all the time, reacting on the players' feedback and producing interesting storyline which will drive players to be loyal to myTrueSound's games.

As a limitation, the difficulty in gaining participants to the survey might cause limited insight to the potential usage of SNS platforms as a marketing strategy for B&VI. For the sake of survey rate of return optimization, some questions related to details on B&VI's SNS user habits and B&VI's game play experience have not been asked. Such data would give more information for companies targeting the B&VI segment. In addition, the use of ASO (App Store Optimization) as well as how to strategically design both game app and game introduction in the app store, could be studied for future research.

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