VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
VASA YRKESHÖGSKOLA
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Ziyin Qin

Marketing Communication Research on Angry Birds Merchandise in China

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VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Degree Programme of International Business

ABSTRACT

Game and cartoon merchandise is a new industry that can bring large benefits to related companies, and hence its marketing communication study is an up-to-date topic. The main objective of this thesis is to provide relevant information about marketing communication in China to Rovio, since it will officially launched its famous brand Angry Birds in China soon. How to promote Angry Birds merchandise should be a significant issue when Rovio faces the large number of potential customers and the specific marketing environment in China. Based on the theoretical concepts and the fact analysis, a research was designed, which concerns with Chinese customers' attitudes to Angry Birds and their preferences in marketing communication tools.

The main areas of study were: 1. marketing communication and promotion tools; 2. environmental influences in Chinese market; 3. marketing communication process; 4. experience and preparation in Angry Birds merchandise promotion.

The research is based on a questionnaire form and it was delivered to the respondents over the Internet. The questionnaire was divided into three parts: 1. basic information; 2. attitude to marketing communication and promotion tools; 3. awareness of Angry Birds and its merchandise. The second part aimed at collecting general information and the thirds part was used for information specialization. Finally, conclusions and advice were obtained.

VAASAN AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU
kansainvälisen liiketoiminnan

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Ziyin Qin
Opinnäytetyön nimi	Tutkimus Angry Birds kauppatavaroiden markkinointiviestinnästä Kiinassa
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Pelejä ja sarjakuvalehtiä ovat uuden teollisuuden kauppatavaroita ja ne voivat luoda suuria etuja yrityksille. Tämän tutkielman päätavoite on toimittaa asiaankuuluvat tiedot markkinointiviestinnästä Kiinassa Rovioon koska Angry Birds käynnistetään kohta Kiinassa. Angry Birds kauppatavaroiden esittäminen on merkittävä ongelma koska Kiinassa on niin monta mahdollista asiakasta ja Kiinan markkinointiympäristö on myös uusi heille. Tutkimuksen tarkoitus on selvittää esimerkiksi kiinalaisten asiakkaiden asenteita Angry Birdsiin.

Tärkeimmät aiemmat tutkimukset ovat: 1. Markkinointiviestintä ja edistämisen työkalut; 2. Ympäristövaikutukset Kiinan markkinoille; 3. Markkinointiviestinnän prosessi; 4. Angry Birds kauppatavaroiden edistäminen.

Tutkimus on tehty kyselylomakemuodossa ja se on toimitettu vastaajille Internetin kautta. Kyselylomake sisältää kolme osaa. 1. Perustiedot; 2. Asenne markkinointiviestintään ja myynninedistämisen työkaluihin; 3. Angry Birds kauppatavaroiden tietoisuus. Toisessa osassa tavoitteena on koota yleistätietoa ja kolmannessa osassa erikoistietoa.

_____

Avainsanat   Markkinointiviestintä, Edistämisen työkalut, Kauppatavara, Kiina

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1. INTRODUCTION

First of all there is the general introduction of the topic. It will present the background of the study, which includes a brief description of game and cartoon merchandise industry and its market in China, as well as a short introduction of Angry Birds. An explanation concerning the research problems and objectives is then summarized. The limitations of this research and the structure of this thesis are also discussed in this chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

Children are always attracted by various kinds of toys. Excluding traditional toys, they also love the toys with special images. Boys have interest in Transformers, since these robots are very cool in the animations and games; girls like the Hello Kitty, although she is only a cartoon cat from Japan. These game and cartoon merchandise are always much more expensive than other toys, but none can stop their glamour.

Today, the love of the game and cartoon is not the children's privilege only. With the development of video games, cartoons, comics and animations products, increasing numbers of teenagers and adults are enjoying the fun of them. And as a matter of course, a new business – game and cartoon merchandise industry is booming. The merchandise excites the game and cartoon lovers with the hypostatization of the intangible images, and at the same time, they bring huge profits to the manufacturers.

From 2011, a large number of birds with angry faces entered into the game and cartoon merchandise world and were soon welcomed by many people. They are Angry Birds from the popular mobile game "Angry Birds". The popularity of this game promotes the hot sale of the merchandise, and the effect is mutual.

In China, although the problem of piracy is a serious harm to the cultural industry, the big number of potential customers still attracts entertainment companies to invest, and Angry Birds is no exception. Due to the specificity of the Chinese market, how to promote the brand and products is one of the problems company is

most concerned about.

As shown in Marketing Management (Kotler & Keller & Brady & Goodman & Hansen 2009: 4): Marketing is a significant factor of any business in today's highly competitive environment and financial success is often dependent on the ability of marketing. Furthermore, rapidly emerging forces of globalization have led firms to market beyond the borders of their home countries. The game and cartoon firms are without an exception; they pay much attention to international marketing and regard international marketing as an integral part of a firm's marketing strategy (Wikipedia: Marketing Management 2012).

In marketing management, companies must communicate with their customers and there should be a controlled direction to those communications. As one of the four major elements of the marketing mix, promotion uses advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and personal selling to achieve the company's communication objectives. Promotion – now called it marketing communication – is the focal point that will be explored in this thesis.

1.1.1   Game and Cartoon Merchandise and its market in China

Game and cartoon merchandise is a general concept. It refers to the industry which regards the video game, animation, comic and cartoon as the carrier to explore the surrounding potential resources for more products. With a game or cartoon as the original concept, the products include physical goods such as toys, food, clothes and daily products, and also including music, image, books, and other cultural products. These different forms of products constitute a huge industrial chain. It brings large amounts of profits for the game and cartoon manufacturers, while at the same time it integrates the game industry and the traditional industry closely together, driving the whole industry's development forward. (Baidu Encyclopaedia: Game and cartoon merchandise 2012)

On one hand, the significance of the merchandise is to improve the popularity of the games or cartoons themselves. On the other hand, they also strengthen the profitability of the game or the cartoon and diversify the profit model. Under

certain conditions, the main profit point will ever shift from the game or cartoon itself to its merchandise.

Data shows that the value of merchandise of a game or a cartoon can occupy at least 20% to 50% of the whole value of the game or cartoon itself. In Japan, the sales ratio of video games and their merchandise is 3:7, and in the United States and Europe, the number is 1:9 (Cool see the game 2011). In such countries, to most teenagers and even middle-aged game-lovers, the love of the merchandise is much more important than the games or cartoons themselves.

For example, the merchandise of the game World of Warcraft now consists of trading cards, clothing, dolls, books, virtual pets and so on. The WOW password token is a gadget like a key pendant. The players can simply click the button on it to get a security number which is used for bind authentication in the game. Due to the excellent effect against account stealing, 40 percent of the European and American players have purchased this thing. As a result, WOW password token with the unit price 6.5 US dollar made a contribution to Blizzard Entertainment with more than 26 million US dollars' income. (Jschina 2011)

Japanese anime derivative product is a representative of successful merchandise industries such as BANDAI, whose business consists of the development, production and sales of the toys, models, cards and so on (Wikipedia: Bandai 2012). Today in Japan, there is a booming industry under the cooperation of the whole system.

Until today in China, neither in the field of video games nor comics and animation there are brand as strong as WOW or Disney. The poor development of the domestic game and cartoon industry and the huge number of customers provide a chance to the international game and cartoon industry. Therefore, more and more foreign entertainment companies are looking for the best way to share this big business by developing their merchandise.

According to Internet Consumer Research Center survey for the online gamers, as shown in Figure 1, 63.2% of responders have purchased the game merchandise

within the last year (2011), and a large number of the online gamers have had experience of purchasing game merchandise. In addition, another survey, as shown in Figure 2, states that this buying behavior is not an accidental behavior, but a long-standing demand. All the data show the fact that China has a huge target group for game and cartoon merchandise.
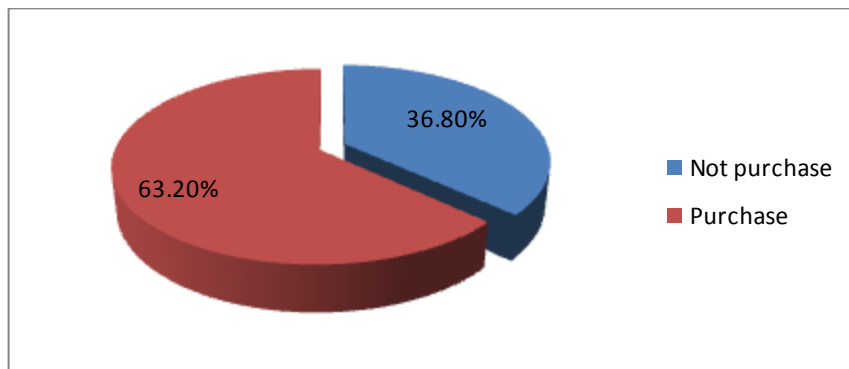
Figure 1. The game merchandise purchase situation among Chinese online game users in 2011 (The Internet consumer research center 2011)
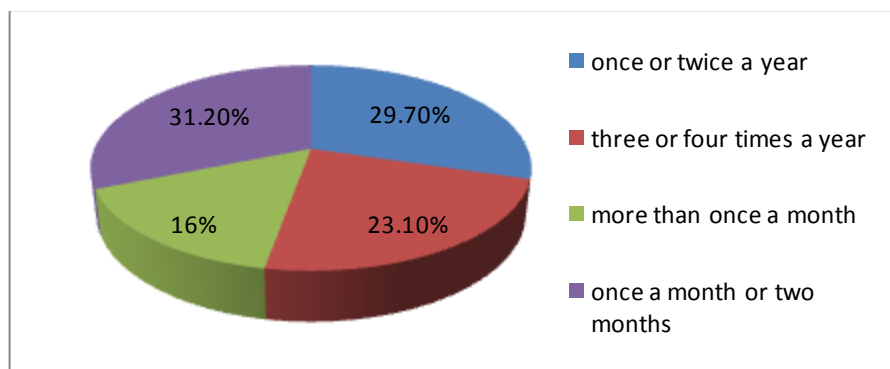
Figure 2. The frequency of the purchase for game merchandise among Chinese online game users in 2011(The Internet consumer research center 2011)

Recently, NikoPartners - a market intelligence company (Nikopartners 2012), published a research report which states that casual game players have become the most dominant group in the Chinese game market.

Because of the size of the target group, casual games are relatively easier to gather a high popularity in a short period. It also creates very favorable conditions for the development of the casual game merchandise. There is an obvious phenomenon in

China for the popular casual games of "Angry Birds" and "Plants Vs Zombies". (Wang 2011; Joynews 2011)

1.1.2 Introduction of Angry Birds and Rovio

Angry Birds is now a mainstream entertainment brand. The creator of these birds is Rovio Entertainment Oy.

Rovio is an entertainment media company in Finland. In 2009, Rovio released Angry Birds, a casual puzzle game for touch screen in smartphones that became a worldwide phenomenon from 2010 onwards. The Angry Birds games have enjoyed continuing worldwide chart success, and the franchise has since expanded to a variety of new business areas. Rovio is rapidly expanding its activities in broadcast media, merchandising, publishing and services. (Rovio 2011)

The Angry Birds characters have gotten much attention in the world's biggest market in China as well. From 2012, Rovio is planning to have 200 Angry Birds Stores all over China within three years to sell a wide range of different merchandise such as clothing, toys, and food etc (Chang 2011). The detail of Angry Birds and its merchandise will be introduced in the following chapters.

1.2 Research Problems and Objective

As the introduction explains, the aim of the research is to find out the promotional approaches in China for Angry Birds merchandise, especially the most cost-effective promotional approaches. Rovio has just formally entered into the Chinese market and is building a strategy of marketing communication in China which is a significant step in its marketing management process.

In order to achieve the main purpose, the following problems are set:

- For game and cartoon merchandise, which promotion tools are the most accepted by the Chinese customers?
- What do the Chinese audiences think about Angry Birds and its merchandise? Which tools most effectively improve their awareness of the Angry Birds brand?

- How to make the promotion tools suitable for the Chinese situation and cater to the taste of Chinese customers?

The various promotion tools, the environmental factors, and the process of promotion management in the theoretical part of the research, as well as the exploration of the marketing communication experience of Angry Birds in the third chapter – this knowledge contributes to the research problems. A questionnaire concerning the above problems will also be designed.

1.3 The Limitation of the Research

Since Rovio has decided that more than 200 Angry Birds Stores will be established all over China within three years, there needs to be a thorough marketing communication plan as a part of the "Chinese Program Planning Book". If this research compare with the official one, the former is limited by the time, the funds, the range of research target group and the specialization level.

Also, although an interview with the topic related persons of the case company is a good method to gain information for this research; this research obtains data only by a questionnaire. It means that the research result only yielded from the views of customers and the study lacks of the relevant information from the company.

1.4 Thesis Structure

There are 6 chapters in the thesis and each chapter stand for one part, but at the same time every chapter is related to the others. The thesis starts with the briefly introduction, then the theoretical concepts of the study: such as marketing communication and promotion tools are introduced. Based on the theoretical study, some experience the case company has had can be discussed. At last, a research study is formed upon all the above, and the data and the results will lead the conclusion and recommendations.

The structure of the whole thesis is shown in Figure 3.

Introduction
- The first chapter illustrates the background of the study, the objectives and limitations of the research, as well as a structure of the study.

Theoretical Concepts
- The second chapter focuses on marketing communication. The promotion tools, the factors which influence communication mix in China, and a firm's marketing communication management process will be introduced in detail.

Application of the theory
- The third chapter presents the application of the theoretical concepts of the case company, including its marketing communication experiences in other countries and some suggestions for its business in China. It will help to understand the following research study.

Research Method
- In the fourth chapter, the thesis presents how the research operates. It includes the methodology of the research and the methods of sampling together with data collection and analysis.

Empirical Finding
- The following chapter shows the data which are collected in the survey and will be discussed the results and the finding.

Conclusion
- The final chapter begins with the summary of the whole study and the conclusion of the research. Then recommendations for the case company and the future study will also be presented.
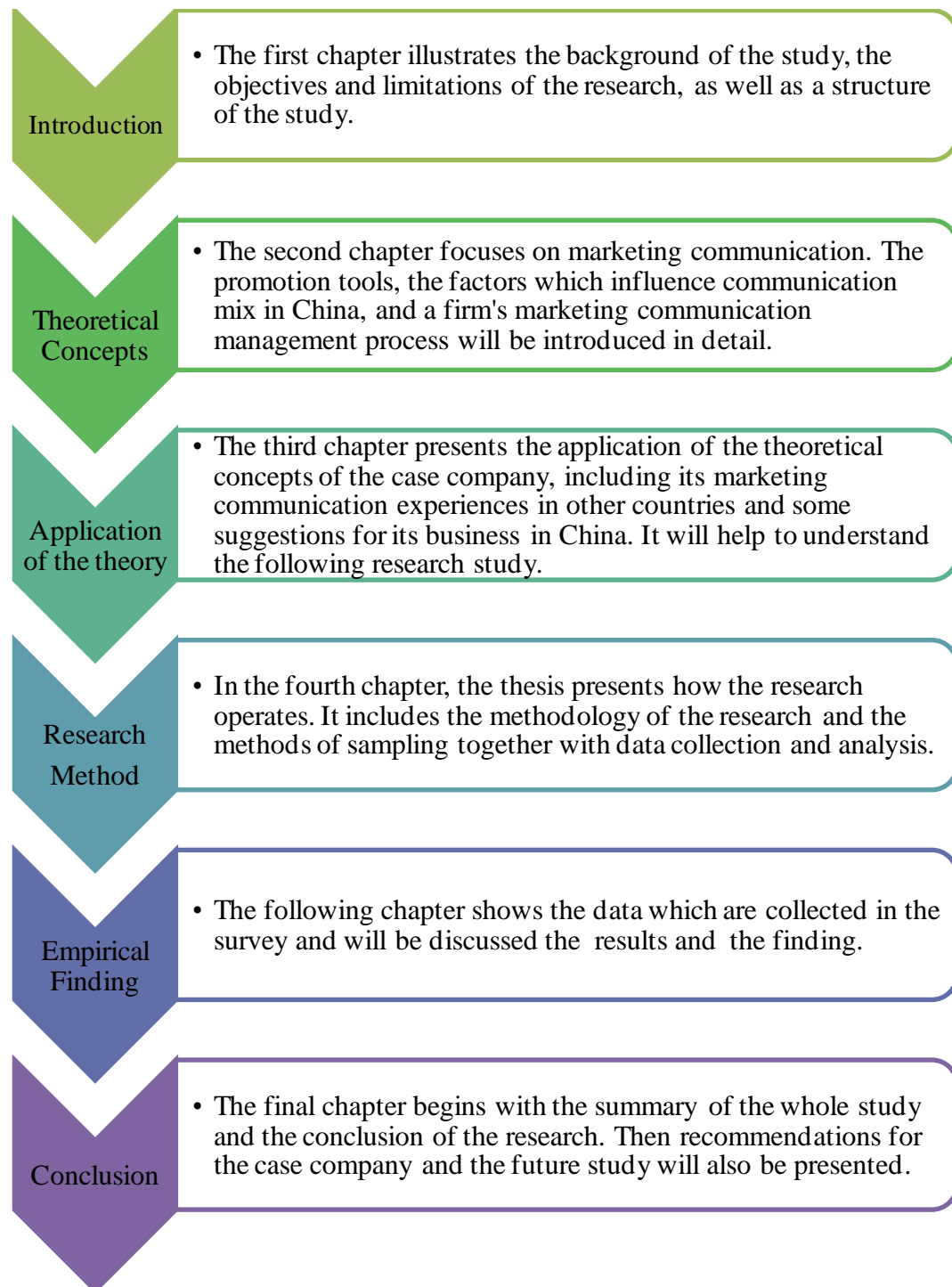
Figure 3. The structure of the thesis

2. MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION TOOLS

In the process of "flying" to China, Angry Birds will communicate with the Chinese customers and apply different promotion tools flexibly. This chapter will explore the promotion tools, the Chinese environmental influences on marketing communication, and the marketing communication process.

2.1 Overview of Marketing Communication

Modern marketing calls for more than developing a good market offering, pricing it attractively and making it available to target customers. Companies must also communicate with the present and the potential customers, and what they communicate should not be left to chance. For most companies, therefore, the question is not whether to communicate, but how much to spend, what to say, what is the target, in what ways to say it, and how often to say it. To reach and influence target market effectively companies should make their entire communications efforts blend into a consistent and coordinated communication program (Kotler 2009: 688).

Marketing communication is the process of delivery (inform, persuade and remind) information or ideas of a product (a good or a service) to the target audiences, both directly and indirectly (Burnett & Moriarty 1998: 3). It can be regarded as the "voice" of a company (Kotler 2009: 690).

Figure 4 shows the communication process. Sender and Receiver are the major parties in a communication and the message is the communication tool in the process. Encoding, decoding, response and feedback represent the major communication functions. The element of noise is made up of the random and competing messages that may interfere with the intended communication.

In this system, the sender must know what the receiver wants to get and they must encode their messages so the receiver can decode them. Then the messages go through the media and finally reach the target audience. (Kotler 2009: 694)
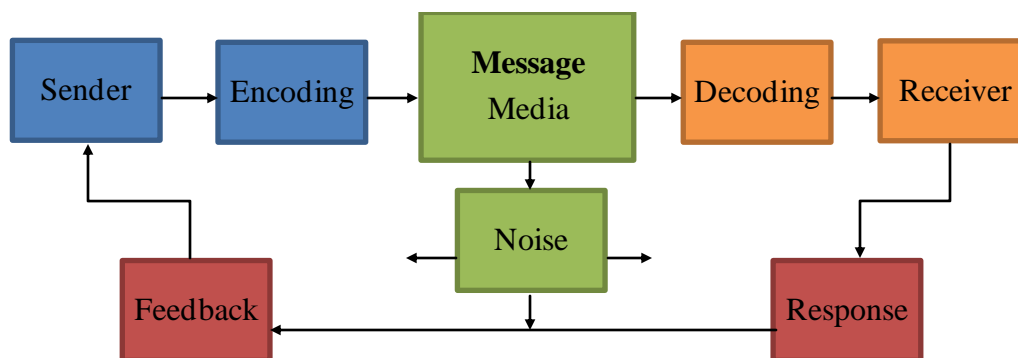
Figure 4. Communication process (Kotler 2009: 694)

Today, the marketing communication – especially the international marketing communication – is more and more common used in marketing management. Marketing communication performs many functions for customers. It can "tell" the customers "how, why, who, when and where" about a market offering and customers can judge the reputation of the company's brand by the information of the market offering. There could be an incentive or reward for trial or usage. Furthermore, marketing communication can also contribute to brand equity by establishing a long-term memory brand and creating a good brand image. (Kotler 2009: 690)

The objectives of marketing communication are just the goals of communication program. These objectives are creating brand awareness and brand image, deliver information, and developing the market. However, the final goal of the marketing communication strategy is to help sell the product to keep the company in business (Burnett 1998: 4).

2.2 Promotion Tools

A company should be ready to plan the marketing mix in detail once it has decided on its overall competitive marketing strategy. The marketing mix is one of the major concepts in modern marketing, which can be defined as the set of controllable, tactical marketing tools that the company blends to produce the response it wants in the target market. The marketing mix covers everything the firm can do to influence the demand for its products and these possibilities can be

collected into four groups: product, price, place, and promotion, known as the "4Ps". (Kotler & Armstrong 2001: 67)

Among the 4Ps, promotion means the attempts and activities with which companies persuade target customers to buy their products by communicating the products' merit to them (Kotler 2001: 68). In other words, promotion builds relationships with potential customers and existing customers, involves informing, motivating and reminding them to purchase the products.
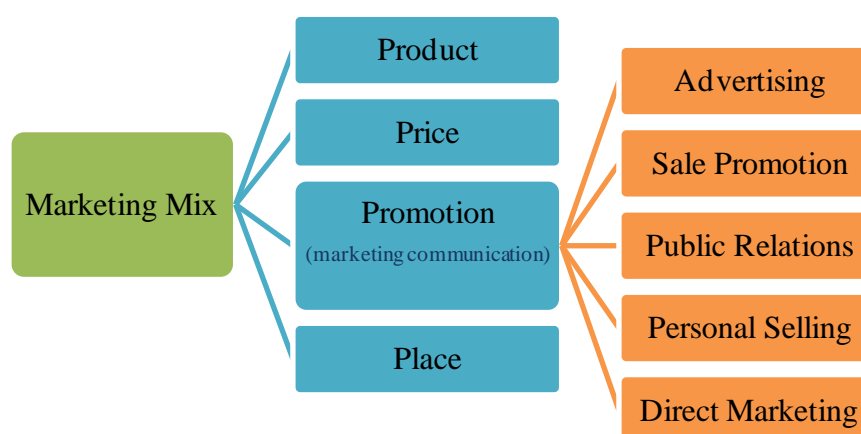

Figure 5. Promotion mix (Kotler 2001)

As Figure 5 shows, a company's marketing promotion mix consists of the blend of advertising, personal selling, sale promotion, public relations, and direct-marketing. They are the Promotion Tools that the company can use to pursue its marketing objectives (Kotler 2001: 512).

Beside the above tools, marketing communication has more ways to communicate something to buyers – the packing of the product, the design of the product, the price of the product, and even the stores that sell it – in other words, the marketing communication is a general concept that encompasses communication via all of the marketing mix variables (Shimp & DeLozier 1986: 5). Thus, although the promotion mix is the company's primary communication activity, the 4Ps – promotion, product, price and place – must be coordinated for all communication activities (Kotler 2001: 512).

Each element has a different communication capacity to achieve different objectives (Kitchen & Pelsmacker 2004: 20). Their abilities vary in effectiveness, costs and controllability as outlined by Chris Fill (1995: 12). Figure 6 shows the level of the capabilities of each communication mix in three selection criteria: communication, cost and control.

	Advertising	Sales Promotion	Public Relations	Personal Selling	Direct Marketin
Communicatio					
Ability to deliver a personal message	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Ability to reach a large audience	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Level of interaction	Low	Low	Low	High	High
Credibility given by target audience	Low	Medium	High	Medium	Medium
Costs					
Absolute costs	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Cost per contact	Low	Medium	Low	High	High
Wastage	High	Medium	High	Low	Low
Size of investment	High	Medium	Low	High	Medium
Control					
Ability to target particular audiences	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Management's ability to adjust: the development of the tools as	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High

Figure 6. Key characteristics of marketing communication tools (Fill 1995:12)

There are many different types in every promotion tool. In the following sectors, these five promotion tools will be introduced in detail.

2.2.1 Advertising

Advertising, which means a paid, non-personal communication via media by the companies, organizations and individuals who hope to inform or persuade target audience (Burnett 1998:279). For most of the business firms, advertising helps to sell products.

The strength of advertising is that it can reach a large number of audiences quickly to enhance the broad-based demand for products (Burnett 1998:279). Today advertising can also be targeted at niche markets, since there are media vehicles that target niche audiences. Advertising is a good tool for building brand awareness and creating long-term brand image. In addition, advertising message is easy to control by the company, which is hard in public relations. (Smith & Zook 2011:308)

The disadvantages of advertising are obvious as well. The credibility of advertising is always less than that of other promotion tools as it seen as "trying to sell something". As a result, customers may avoid advertising by turning the page or changing the channel, and there are even technologies to screen out an advertisement. Some advertising also requires large budgets and a long time in order to enhance its credibility. Another problem is that among the audience it reached, many of them are likely to be nonusers of the products. It leads big waste of the impressions. (Burnett 1998:279; Smith 2011:308)

An effective advertising must accomplish three tasks – draw audience's attention, be memorable, and deliver a persuasive message. The first step is to make an impression on the viewer or reader, and then, use recognition and recall to enhance audience's memo ability. Finally, advertising motivate costumers to take an action successfully. (Burnett 1998:284-287)

The types of advertising are various: Television advertising, print advertising, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, online advertising and many new advertising like Apps. Marketing communication managers should analyze the

product and the market comprehensively, and choose the most cost-effective media for the advertising or coordinate several of them to achieve the goals.

Television advertising

TV is generally known as the most powerful advertising medium. Because of its two main strengths: it can demonstrate a market offering vividly and persuade customers by persuasively explaining the consumer benefits; it also can dramatically play users and usage imagery, brand personality and other intangibles. (Kotler 2009:725)

Print advertising

Print advertising consist printed advertisements in magazines, newspapers, brochures, postcards and even flyers. Copy and art are the two key elements in print advertising. Print advertising can offer a clear and extended explanation with its visual nature. (Burnett 1998:293)

Radio advertising

The advantage of radio advertising is obvious: stations are highly targeted in terms of demographic, psychographic and geographic (segmentation variables). And the cost of radio advertising is much less than TV or print advertising. As a result, radio advertising is especially useful for small local businesses. (Kotler 2009: 727)

Outdoor advertising

Advertising that around audiences in their daily external environment is called outdoor advertising. The types of outdoor advertising are painted walls, bus benches, truck displays, shopping mall display and billboard. Outdoor advertising is a good approach to target group with specific messages at a time when they are most susceptible to its impact (Burnett 1998:295). For example, the display and billboard of Disney merchandise in a Disney Park is the best way to reach Disney fans.

Online advertising

Online advertising uses the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) to deliver messages to customers. Examples of online advertising are contextual ads on search engine results pages, banner ads, blogs, rich media ads, social network, interstitial ads, online classified advertising, advertising networks and e-mail marketing (Wikipedia: Online advertising 2012). As more and more people turn to the Internet as a source for daily news, socialization and communication, online advertising has a rapid development in recent years.

Apps advertising

Apps are software applications which provide users almost everything from a mobile phone, include game, calculator, weather forecasts, music player, searching tools and so on. Many brands have their own apps; other apps are designed by developers and sold to organizations that find them useful to their business (Smith 2011:286). The apps is a new cost-effective communication tool in extending brand usage, developing product awareness, and adding value to customer experiences by putting a brand or a business on to millions of devices worldwide.

2.2.2 Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a promotion tool that provides sale-related incentives to generate a specific, measurable action or response for a product or service. It offers customers an "extra incentive" which in the form of additional product, cash, prizes, and so on. Totally speaking, it performs as change the accepted price-value relationship by increasing the value, decreasing the price, or both (Burnett 1998:312). Sales promotion's main purpose is to stimulate immediate action – to promote customers to act.

The most significant strength of sales promotion is that it can help to close a sale or drive customers through the last stage of the buying process and increase their purchase frequency. It is particularly cost-effective when introduce a new product. What's more, customers' databases can be built in the process of sales promotion,

and it is useful for tracking customer behavior and connecting customers by direct mail (Burnett 1998:314; Smiths 2011:376). In the end, the customer loyalty can be built step by step.

The disadvantage of sales promotion is that it requires other promotion tools to promote, hence the promotion strategy need a comprehensive consideration. Some sales promotion may be expensive to produce and some of them may damage the brand if it set up unreasonable. (Smith 2011:376)

Since the sales promotion need other promotion tools to promote, the marketing communication managers must consider how it relates to the overall marketing communication mix. For example, advertising may deliver the information about a sales promotion to customers; sales promotion also can help to complete a direct-mail programs by collect the databases. (Burnett 1998:317)

Sales promotion can be divided into the trade sales promotion, sales force promotion and consumer sales promotion. The following study only explores the tools for consumer sales promotion.

Price deals

A customer price deal can save money when customers buy the products, so it is commonly used to expand new products or encourage people to buy more. But only when the price is an important factor in the choice, the price deal is helpful. There are usually three kinds of price deal – discount, coupons, and refunds. (Burnett 1998:330-332)

Sweepstakes and contest

Customers always be excited when the offering promising "something for nothing". Consumer contests are promotions that require customers to compete for a prize; the sweepstake is a random drawing that only requires customers to attend and be selected. If a sweepstake or contest is hold properly, it can generates a large amount of customers to involve, then create a buying excitement, offer themes to advertising, and build customer loyalty. (Burnett 1998:332-335)

Premiums

A premium is a reward given to customers for their particular performance, such as purchasing something or visiting a purchase point. The premium may be free or below its market price. Direct premiums and mail premiums are two types of consumer premiums. Direct premiums can create the incentive just at the purchasing time, while mail premiums require the customer to take some action before they get the premium, such as sending the collected seals. (Burnett 1998:335-336)

Sampling

Allowing the customers to experience the products or service free for a while (or charge a little fee) is called sampling. Sampling is terrific effective for introducing a new product; therefore, the product sampled must be able to create a positive impact with minimal experience time. (Burnett 1998:336)

Continuity programs

The purpose of a continuity program is to keep people using a brand by offering them continuous incentives in order to reward them for their loyalty. Typically, the higher the purchase level is, the greater the benefits. (Burnett 1998:337)

Point-of-sale displays

A point-of-sale display (POS) is a specialized form of sales promotion that is found near, on, or next to a checkout counter. It is intended to draw the customers' attention to products, which may be new products, or on special offer, and is also used to promote during special events, for instance, the seasonal or holiday-time sales. POS displays include shelf edging, dummy packs, display packs, display stands, mobiles, posters, and banners. (Wikipedia: Point of sale displays 2012)

Special edition

The special edition is a special kind of promotion which related with the product itself. It includes the limitation edition, deluxe edition, collector's edition and

others. They are all used as a marketing incentive for various kinds of products, especially the cultural products. A limited edition is restricted in the number of copies produced. A deluxe or collector's edition may implies there is extra material of some kind included, or may refer to products in special limited and numbered editions, sometimes hand-bound, and signed by the artist and containing one or more original works produced directly from his work (Wikipedia: Special edition 2012). The special editions are usually much more expensive than normal editions, and customers have to purchase by special channels and limited ways. Even so, it is an effective approach to attract customers for cultural products.

2.2.3   Public Relations

Public is all the audience that the marketing communicator targets to receive messages about the company. While the relations means these publics are involved in a specific relationship with the company. Companies who want to create goodwill and control the brand image through PR must make sure the relationship is positive for an effective business operation. The aim of PR is to persuade the public to maintain a certain point of view about the company and its products or service.

PR can reach targets which are difficult to inform by other promotion tools, such as upscale opinion leaders. It is very sensitive to public opinions and the cost of most PR tools is usually low. But the most obvious problem is that PR is lack of control over how stories are covered, and its bottom-line impact is difficult to measure. (Burnett 1998:345-347)

Media relations and publicity

People can see commercial news items and videos from the newspapers, trade journals, TV programs and Internet – they are publicity, one of the responsibilities of a media relations program. Most publicity is delivered in the form of a news release that commits a story to paper or video in the style acceptable to the medium for which it is intended. They can be generated through written press

release, video news release for TV programs and digital press packs for all the related vehicles. Nowadays, companies should apply the publicity by more new press releases such as top-ranking free publicity websites and relevant social news sites. (Smith 2011:317; Burnett 1998:365)

In all the media relations, video, films and interviews can influence viewers in a way that other medium can't match. Videos and films can have a products or its information appear in them, which stimulate the customers in a visual way. An interview requires the interviewed staff to be trained and have a good personal image, and its authenticity also need to be guaranteed.

Publications

Publications mean the materials which are published for a company's target audiences; they range from a single-page sheet to a big colorful magazine, include annual reports, brochures, articles and company newsletters. Such publications create reputation and understanding of a company, and also provide information of products and promotion activities to customers. (Burnett 1998:367; Kotler 2001: 746)

Events

Companies can draw publics' attentions to new products or other promotion activities by arranging special events such as news conferences, seminars, outings, trade shows, exhibits, contests and competitions, and anniversaries. (Kotler 2001:746)

Sponsorships

Companies can promote their brands and corporate name by sponsoring sports and cultural events and other activities (Kotler 2001:746). Sponsorships are more than patronage and benefaction – they can help the cooperators and achieving specifically defined communication objectives meanwhile (Smith 2011:343).

Website, Blog, Facebook and Twitter

The company's Web site, blog, Facebook and Twitter are new PR tools which are common used in recent years. Many of the brands have their official and unofficial blogs and other social websites homepages. Blog and Twitter do help to nurture relationships with target audiences. Blog and Facebook can also extend the brand experience into another dimension. (Smith 2011:328)

2.2.4 Personal Selling

Different from other promotion tools whose impacts are often indirect, personal selling's impact is direct. It is refer to the face-to-face presentation of a product or a service to potential customers. In personal selling, information is presented personally, feedback is delivered immediate, and adjustments to the message can be made quickly. The most important factor in personal selling is the sales person: the number of them and their ability of build relationship with audience decide the effect of this tool.

Personal selling is a face-to-face activity; hence customers can obtain a high degree of personal attention. The sales message can be customized to meet the needs of the customer and the two-way nature of the sales process allows the sales team to respond directly and promptly to customers' questions and concerns. In addition, frequent meetings between sales person and customer provide an opportunity to build good long-term relationships. The main disadvantage of personal selling is the cost of employing sales people is a large amount and the training of them also needs large money and time. (Burnett 1998:411-412)

Door-to-door selling

Door-to-door selling is the most common promotion form. It usually performs as the salesman carries samples, instructions book and order forms to visit the customers and do the promotion. Since this kind of promotion offers customized service, it is widely accepted and approved by the customers.

Point-of-sale selling

Point-of-sale selling refers to that the enterprise sets purchase points where the salesman can contact customers. On the contrary of the door-to-door selling, the point-of-sale selling is that the sales people wait the customers to come to selling points and then present for them. Due to the completed products and service in the selling points, the customers' requirements can be easily satisfied, which bring the customers much convenience.

Meeting selling

The meeting selling is refers to the personal presentation of the products or service in various kinds of meetings with customers. The meeting consists of exhibition, trade show, material exchanging meeting, etc. This form of personal selling can reach a wide range of audience, and can influence a huge group with the least presentation effort. With good place, proper time, and trained selling person, the meeting selling is able to make a large sales and effective promotion results with least costs. (Mbalib: Personal selling 2012)

2.2.5   Direct Marketing

Direct marketing is an interactive marketing communication tool made through direct-media technologies or through direct-response ads in mass media. The mail, telephone, direct response advertising and the Internet are all tools that can be used for the direct marketing. In addition, the databases are also necessary in direct marketing communications.

Direct marketing's strengths include: it is more targeted than other marketing communication tools; its results can be measured; all the elements of the communication are very flexible. But direct marketing is ineffective unless it can be used as a long-term strategy, and the unsuccessful coordination with other operations and distributions would lead a poor image of the whole company. (Burnett 1998:380; Hutton & Mulhern 2002:212-213)

Direct marketing can be divided into the outbound and inbound direct marketing. Outbound direct marketing used direct media (mail, telephone, catalogs) to reach customers, while inbound direct marketing made through mass media (TV, radio,

Internet) that are responded to through direct media (Hutton 2002:211-212). The early types of direct marketing include direct mail and telemarketing. Today, the various new mass media communications are more welcomed by companies and customers.

Direct mail and telemarketing

Direct mail marketing is sending an offer, announcement or other items to individual customers in order to build a direct-response communication relationship with them. The main objective of it is to generate a sale.

Telemarketing, just as its name implies, is using the telephone to sell directly to customers. It can be either inbound (calls from customers to companies) or outbound (sales calls initiated the selling organizations).

The above two direct marketing types are widely used and they account for the vast majority of the whole direct marketing sales. (Kotler 2001:628-631; Hutton 2002: 215, 219)

Mass media direct marketing

TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and the Internet offer another way for direct marketing. The most common types are direct- response television marketing and online marketing.

Direct-response television marketing includes direct-response advertising and home shopping channel. The former usually offers product information and ordering numbers to customers, and the latter is a television program or an entire channel dedicated to selling goods and services. Online shopping is developing very fast with the rapid advances in internet and other electronic channels. It is refer to a marketing which conducted by online system in computers or mobile phones. Now the Internet is the primary online marketing channel and the wide application of Wi-Fi also promote the direct marketing on mobile phones. (Kotler 2011: 634-637)

2.3 Environmental Influences on Marketing Communication

International marketing communication is always full with difficulties and strategic options as many differences exist between each country (Smith 2011:206). When a company does business in a new marketplace, every marketing mix is influenced by new marketing environment.

2.3.1   The PEST Analysis

Everything is in the process of changing. Marketing communication and promotion tools are also affected by the rapidly changing business environment and other uncontrollable factors (Smith 2011:246).

The Figure 7 describes the PEST acronym designed by Smith (2011: 246), which provides a statement of the four main environmental influences on marketing communication: Political (including policies, laws and regulations); Economic (including global economic shifts and the economic cycles); Social (including language, culture, values, attitudes, lifestyles, ethics and demographics); Technological (including the development and availability of the Internet, databases, digital TV and much more media). All the influences are consisting of two aspects: vertical and horizontal.
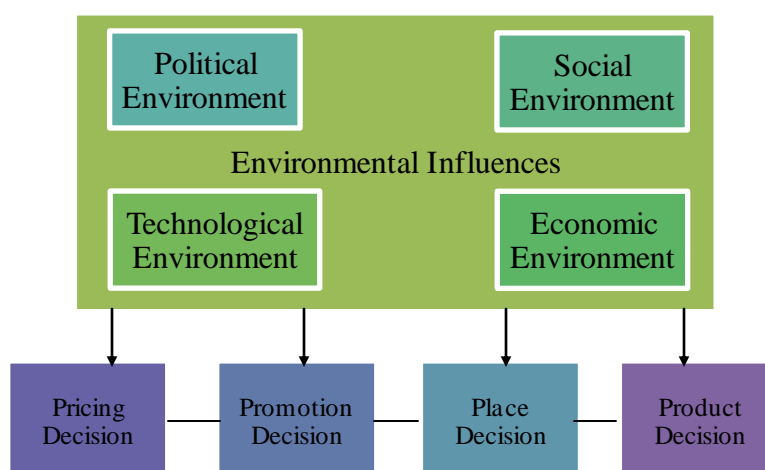

Figure 7. Environmental influences on marketing communication (Shimp 1986: 209; Smith 2011: 246-259)

Political

There are many business legislation provides laws which support the marketing communication principles of being honest and truthful (Smith 2011:248). Some of the legislations may not affect the marketing communication directly, but as the marketing mix elements are affecting each other, they always lead significant influences to marketing communication. Furthermore, there are also many self-regulatory professional codes that play the same role in marketing communication principles. Various bodies draft their own codes which their members must follow. The violation may cause expulsion and negative publicity. These voluntary codes are cheaper and quicker to apply than laws, and they offer useful guidance to the marketers (Smith 2011:249; Burnett 1998:207-215).

In recent years, with the development of the new promotion tools, legal issues related with communication mix have raised, such as privacy rights in marketing on the Internet, personal information in databases, and telemarketing and Internet marketing about when, how and how much marketers can solicit business over phone or on the Internet. (Hutton 2002: 285-286)

The different legal systems lead to the different explanations on marketing communication principles. Companies must understand the host country's laws, rules and regulations, especially the things about the promotion activities. Therefore, visionary companies usually hire experts and lawyers from the host country to guide the communication decisions.

Economic

Economic influences all the marketing mix all the time. On a vertical view, economies move in cycles, marketers should try to harmonize the marketing communication mix with the economic trends.

On a horizontal view, the global shift in economy affects the marketing a lot. The different economic elements such as GDP, income level, unemployment rate all affect the communication strategies (Smith 2011:252). Generally speaking, the customers in developed countries always emphasize the design and performance,

and pay much attention on advertising; while the customers in developing countries always focus more on the function and price, and prefer the promotional approaches such as interpersonal communication and sales promotion.

Social

The social factors are including: value, language, custom, society organization, education, regions and so on. Their changes are happening all the time around all the people. Today, society roles are becoming less defined; attitudes towards issues change; demographics shifts fast (Smith 2011:253-255). All of the changes affect markets and marketing communication.

International marketing communication is a cross-border activity and it inevitably comes across many social and cultural difficulties. A correct social analysis is the premise of a successful international marketing communication. Any companies with actions of ignore the importance of social factors or unconsciously refer to their own social values will lead to the failure. Only with full consideration of the target markets' social connotation, the companies would be possible to have the competitive advantages in marketing communication.

Technological

Technology keeps changing the face of marketing communication both directly and indirectly (Smith 2011:256). Technologies advances always provide opportunities to satisfy customers and deliver message by the inventing of new communication tools and the improving of existing communication tools. For example, print technology allows magazine to run liquid filled ads and 3D ads; Point-of-sale technology, ranging from robots to shopping cart video screens which can promote "today's special offer"; The Internet is particular changes everything in the marketing. Technology also facilitates the communication strategy for the companies with modeling market analysis, data mining and so on (Smith 2011:258; Shimp 1986: 208-214).

But the level of technology development in different places is imbalance. Therefore, marketing communication media costs and availability differ vastly

from country to country (Kotler 2001:559). A company emphasizes online advertising only can't be success in marketing communication in an area with low computer popularizing rate.

2.3.2 The Marketing Communication Environment in China

All of the above environments lead China to become a market with lots of particularities. These particularities influence every aspect in marketing communication and they can be summarized into following four fields:

Market size and regional differences – economic and social factors (Wang 2006)

The economic boom in China leads to the rapid development of national income and living standard, with the addition of the huge population, the size of the Chinese market is enormous, both the existing and potential customers. The communication effect, the control of the communication tools, and the cost of different tools must be considered based on this fact.

There are also big differences in economic situation and consumption power between regional markets in China because of the history, demography and economic policies. Companies should consider that if it necessary to have decentralized strategy for its marketing communication (Smith 2011:217) – it's depends on the whole objective of the marketing. If the answer is yes, marketers need to make enough researches for different regions and draft regional marketing communication objectives and projects.

Language, culture and society – social and economic factors (Wang 2006)

In the view of language, Chinese is totally different from Latin, which requires careful translating, whether it is advertising messages, product descriptions or instructions. Chinese literacy is also different from Western, both in character words and in meaning (Doole & Lowe 2001:130). Companies should avoid the mistakes on language or literacy and try to deliver the correct and proper information to Chinese customers in marketing communication.

The unique culture is the pride of China. The marketing communication mix in China should respect the Chinese culture and the promotion tools are necessary to combine the traditional ways with the up-to-date styles flexible. China is a high-context country, promotion in China could not as direct as in low-context countries such as American. The taboos of Chinese culture are also sensitive in marketing communication.

In China, the unique culture and society also create many communication differences among value, religion, gender, habit, lifestyle, relationship – the list is endless (Smith 2011:212). Companies need to notice the specific characteristics in Chinese customer behaviors which are influenced by the above differences, and then adjust the promotion strategy with the flow of them. For example, Chinese like to give drinks as presents during festivals – the promotion managers of a wine company should consider that does it favorable to launch a sales promotion of their products during Spring Festival? The social status of women in China is increasing – the manager of a cosmetic brand should think that what would their advertising message looks like to enjoy the customers? Another example is that, Chinese customers prefer to buy products from US, European and Japanese companies (Kotler 2009:477) as they consider them with high quality, foreign companies from the above districts should regard this feature as a strong strength in their marketing communication in China.

China is a united multi-ethnic country. In different places of China, the culture and society may be totally different – this is a very important point for companies to remember.

Media availability – political, social and technological factors

The media availability is very important for the media selection. The mass media such as TV, radio, newspaper, Internet and mobile phones are spreading with an extra speed in China since 21st century, especially the digital media, whose impact cannot be ignored by any foreign companies. A survey by Ipsos (2012) showed that by the end of January 2012, the Chinese digital media had grown to be the mainstream media, which the consumers access most frequently and

longest every day. The digital media has reached more than half (52.7%) of the urban residents and 32.8% of the rural residents, only follows behind the TV media. Chinese consumers surf the Internet more than 3.5 hours each day, which exceeds the TV and make the Internet become the media that the Chinese consumers used longest every day. Furthermore, digital media has a very good response rate. The digital media's marketing information can inspire about 53.7% of the users to response, which is higher than that in TV media (47.6%). In addition, it also stimulates the users to search the related information (29.6%) and tell the information to others (24.9%). The digital media can be a very good information communication channel for different products.

The limitations in Chinese mass media are also obvious. For example, some popular foreign websites such as Facebook and YouTube are forbidden in China; some newspapers with high influence are just published regional; the amount of commercial advertising time is restricted in some TV stations. But at the same time, there are also some high concentration media channels among Chinese people, such as the biggest social website Qzone (TechRice 2011) and the TV station CCTV (China Central Television), which could provide highly centralized channels for the promotion.

Legal restrictions and government policies (political factors)

Whether voluntary codes or actual laws, no harmonized set of them can be found in the world (Smith 2011:213). Companies should at least be familiar with the Chinese basic legal issues and government agencies that regulate the marketing communication field. They need to know what marketing communication can and can't do in China (Hutton 2002:305).

In China, some common issues surrounding marketing communication are including:

- Misrepresentation, fraud and deception;
- Competitive issues;
- Sweepstakes, contests and premiums;

- Privacy and copyright;
- Communication to children (Hutton 2002: 286-288);
- Sensitive topics of politics and customs.

For example, China has many restrictive censorship rules for advertising: It's illegal to use the resources of Chinese national flag, emblem and anthem for commercial advertising; Commercial advertising which on behalf of the Chinese government offices and their functionaries are forbidden, too (Baidu Encyclopedia: Advertising Law of People's Republic of China 2009); The word "best" is banned, as are ads that violate social customs or present women in improper ways (Kotler 2001:559).

One problem is, the Chinese marketing legislations are far from enough and it makes many leaks for lawbreakers. As a result, the phenomenon such as privacy and fraud is serious in Chinese marketing environment. During the process of promoting in China, foreign companies should abide by the Chinese laws and policies and utilize various methods to protect their rights and interests at the same time.

2.4 The Promotion Management Process

Considering the meaning of promotion, the promotion management is the practice of: 1. Coordinating all kinds of promotional elements; 2. Setting objectives for what the promotional elements are intended to accomplish; 3. Establishing budgets that are appropriate and sufficient to support the objectives; 4. Designing specific programs (e.g., advertising campaigns or public events) to accomplish the objectives; 5. Evaluating performance and taking corrective action if results are not in accord with the original objectives (Shimp 1986: 5). Figure 8 represents the promotion management process in terms of 6 major steps: situation analysis, marketing objectives, promotion budget, integration and coordination, promotion management program, and evaluation and control (Shimp 1986: 17-18).
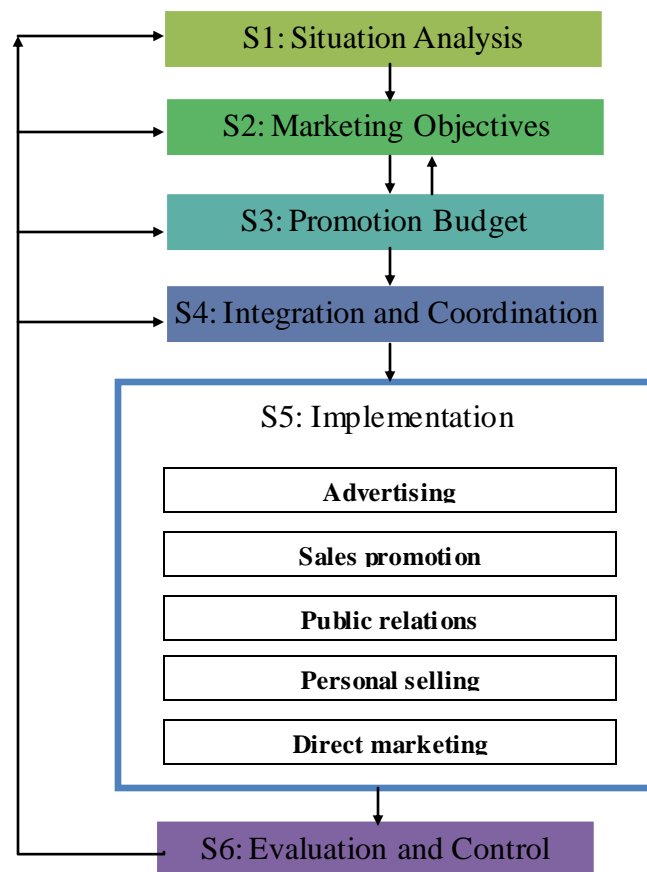
Figure 8. The Promotion management process (Shimp 1986:17)

Step1: performing a situation analysis

The first step in the promotion management process is to analyze the situation. It including two types: internal analysis and external analysis (the same as SWOT analysis: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats).

Internal analysis focuses on the analysis of a company's strengths and weakness. The primary issues of the internal analysis are the financial considerations and the human resources matters. A strong financial reserves and a talented team of promotion specialists are extreme important to promotion programs.

External analysis involves the reviews of the opportunities and threats which from the external marketing environment. The external factors which influence the promotional effectiveness are involving the economic situation, competitive

activity, socio-cultural developments, the legal climate, and the channel of distribution considerations.

Step2: establishing marketing objectives

Marketing objectives include matters such as sales levels, marketing cost considerations, and sales performance which coordinating with specific market segments, geographical locales and time schedules. Establishing marketing objectives is the process to decide what general behavior the company is trying to elicit from what audience over what period of time.

Step3: setting the promotion budget

The company need to know what is the amount of funds that can be used for the marketing communication mix activities. Figure 6 shows that the marketing objectives and the promotion budget are interactive decisions, which means the initial statement of the marketing objectives decide the size of budget; however, if the funds are insufficient, the objectives have to be revised in order to spend less.

Step4: integrating and coordinating promotion elements

All the promotion mix must work together for the overall marketing objectives. As the promotion programs are easy to fail due to the unsuccessful integration of the promotion mix, many companies have created organizational positions in which one individual is responsible for assuring that proper coordination is achieved.

Step5: implementing the promotion management program

In the implementing process, every promotion mix would go through a similar sequence. The sequence would put advertising as an example to illustrate. There are 5 steps in the implementing process as following:

Advertising budget – The process begin with the budget analysis, which is subject to revision in consideration of proposed advertising objectives in Step 2 and the whole marketing communication budget in Step 3.

Advertising objectives – Advertising objectives, which are more often stated as communication goals, such as: To create customer awareness of the products; To enhance the customer's attitude to the offering; And to generate trial purchase behavior. The other promotion mixes also have their own specific objectives.

Creative strategy – Creative strategy follows the objectives, which deals with message content and presentation. What is the best persuasive message or the most impressed message and the way to present it need to be discussed and exercised in this step.

Media selection – Every promotion tool has various media, for example, the advertising media include television advertising, print advertising, radio advertising, outdoor advertising, and online advertising and so on. The choice of the advertising media is influenced by all considerations.

Implementation – The final stage is putting the programs into action. The company would produce the advertising, select the media, buy broadcast time and print the advertisements.

**Step6: evaluating and controlling promotion program**

Promotion management requires measuring all programs for effectiveness and corrective action and the feedback flows from this step to all other five steps. An evaluation may display that: 1. the situation analysis was uncompleted. 2. The marketing objectives were unreasonable. 3. The promotion budget was insufficient. 4. The promotion mix was not coordinated properly. (Shimp 1986:16-22; Hutton 2002: 13-15)

3. ANGRY BIRDS MERCHANDISE AND ITS PROMOTION

Nobody can deny that the game Angry Birds has been a big success since its birth in 2009. With a combined 1000 million downloads across all platforms and including both regular and special editions, the game has been called "one of the most mainstream games out right now", "one of the great runaway hits of 2010", and "the largest mobile app success the world has seen so far" (Wikipedia: Angry Birds 2012). Its popularity led to not only the different versions in personal computers and gaming consoles, but also a market for the merchandise.

3.1 The Angry Birds Merchandise

Picture 1 reveals that Rovio's revenue has jumped from an estimated 10 million dollars in 2010 to 100 million dollars in 2011. (BI Intelligence 2011)
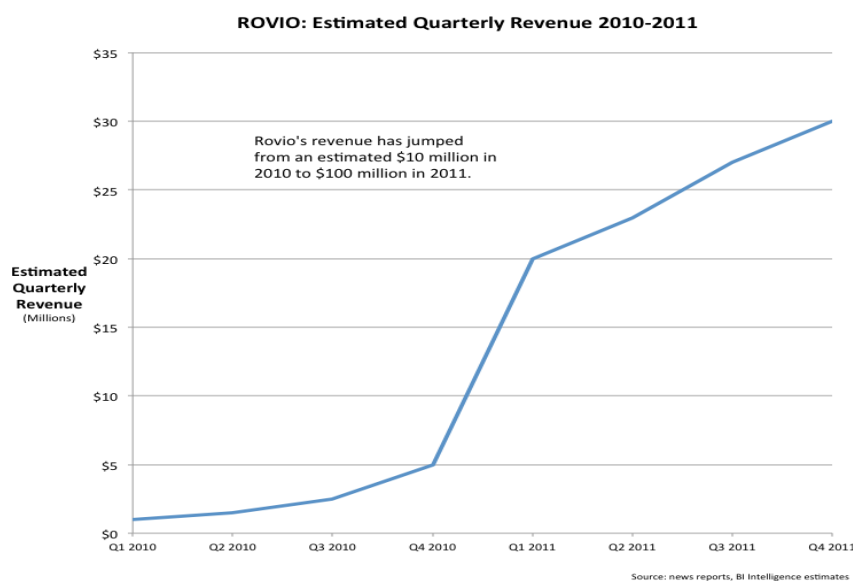

Picture 1. Rovio: estimated quarterly revenue 2010-2011 (BI Intelligence 2011)

The profits of Rovio are mainly from four approaches:

- Paid game downloads
- Ads in free game downloads
- Partnerships and franchising
- Merchandise. (Miller 2012)

The development of the merchandise is significant. Picture 2 shows an analysis made by Panjiva (2012), a research company in the United States. According to the analysis, shipments of Angry Birds-related merchandise to the United States have increased 500 percent in just five months (Reidy 2011). In September 2011, Rovio revealed that it is selling around one million Angry Bird t-shirts and another one million plush toys every single month (Hernandez 2011). The Angry Birds merchandise makes a huge contribution to Rovio and forms 20%-40% of the company's total revenues (Zhao 2012).
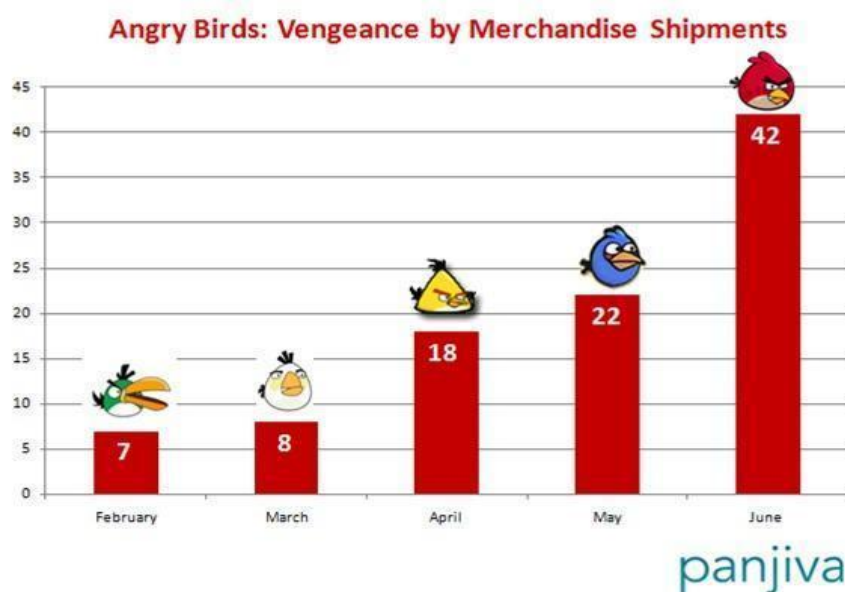
Picture 2. Shipments rise for Angry Birds merchandise (Panjiva, 2011)

Rovio began to sell Angry Birds merchandise online from 2010, and it has expanded the number of products the customers can buy. Now there are more than 20,000 licensed Angry Birds merchandise on sale – from green pig slippers to red bird iPhone cases. The latest product was a cookbook about how to cook eggs.

Customers can buy the merchandise from many network shops, which include the official Angry Birds online shop, Amazon, eBay, Tmall, etc. In addition, Angry Birds merchandise can also be found in some malls. In November 2011, the world's first Angry Birds store opened in the Finnish capital city, Helsinki (ABC News 2011). Products on sale include Angry Birds shirts, ties, plush toys, bags and games. In the future the shop plans to become an Angry Birds Magic Place

where gamers are provided with exclusive gaming features (Goodnewsfinland 2011).

Now Angry Birds has changed from being just an app to becoming a great Angry Birds empire with dedicated fans that purchase all kinds of Angry Birds merchandise (Angry Birds Online Blog 2011). Mr. Peter Vesterbacka, Rovio's Chief Marketing Officer said in an interview, that their aim is to build the company into a media firm similar to Disney (Reuters 2012).

3.2 Promotion Mix of Angry Birds Merchandise

One of the factors leads to the phenomenon of strong selling of the merchandise is Angry Birds' successful application of the marketing communication and promotion tools.

Based on the popularity of the game itself, Angry Birds coordinated the communication mix and applied various promotion tools to achieve the marketing objectives. The following contents are some examples of the application of the promotion tools.

Advertising

Picture 3. Screenshot of Angry Birds merchandise advertising on YouTube (YouTube: Angry Birds pet toys 2012)

Online ads – Angry Birds merchandise has a large number of online advertisements in big websites such as YouTube and Facebook. Picture 3 is an example of the advertisements on YouTube.

Print ads – Angry Birds builds cooperation with many merchandisers where customers could buy the merchandise. The print advertisements are usually leaflets of toys in supermarkets and comic books in bookstores.

Apps ads – If the customers download the free version Angry Birds game, they can see the advertisements of the merchandise on it. In most cases, these advertisements are also approaches of direct marketing by which customers can enter into the Angry Birds merchandise online shops.

Sales promotion

Picture 4. The publicity of Walmart for Angry Birds Space merchandise promotions (Walmart: Go to Walmart and look for the golden eggsterolds)

Premiums – Rovio cooperates with Walmart for the promotion of special merchandise with clues unlocks bonus levels of Angry Birds Space. This premiums activity started in March, and is exclusive to Walmart (See Picture 4). The retailer is selling limited-edition Angry Birds items like apparel, plush toys, mobile phones and snacks that contain an embedded "Golden Egg steroid". Walmart is also offering four such clues to its 13 million-plus Facebook fans via the company's brand page. (Aune 2012; Snider 2012)

Sampling – Customers could experience the unique fun such as play the "Angry Birds real life version" with the toys and other merchandise in Angry Birds shops.

Public relations

Picture 5. Toys show on Angry Birds Space launch event in Hong Kong (Micgadget 2012)

Event – To celebrate the launch of Angry Birds Space, Rovio and partners hosted a series of launch events for fans of the Angry Birds game in Beijing, Helsinki, Hong Kong, Seattle and Tokyo. The new plush toys and T-shirt of the Angry Birds Space characters were showed in the events (See Picture 5). (Chang 2012)

Blog, Facebook and Twitter – Angry Birds has its official Blog, Facebook and Twitter, which publish information about Angry Birds merchandise.

3.3 Angry Birds Merchandise in China

Just following the USA, China has become the second largest overseas market of Angry Birds. As the piracy of Angry Birds merchandise is increasing seriously in China, Rovio have to establish a thorough marketing communication system with Chinese customers as soon as possible in order to push them to access the genuine products. For this purpose, Rovio has made some effort.

In February of this year, Rovio has already opened the official Angry Birds online shop in Tmall – the biggest Internet shopping mall in China where customers can buy over 30 kinds of merchandise here. In July, Angry Birds exclusive shops will appear in Shanghai and Beijing first (Netease Reports 2012). Furthermore, Rovio is planning to have 200 Angry Birds Stores all over China within three years to sell wider range of different merchandise (Chang 2011).

Rovio is trying to improve its brand awareness and communication ability in China all the time. Here are some examples:

- In September 2011, Rovio first introduced Angry Birds Mid-autumn Festival version in China, this action obtained much attention among the Chinese customers (Beareyes 2012);
- In January 2011, Angry Birds opened its official SinaBlog (one of the most popular Chinese microblogging websites) – AngryBirdsRovio, which publishes the latest news about Angry Birds merchandise to fans and organizes online activities. Now there are more than one hundred thousand Angry Birds fans on SinaBlog (May 2012) and everyone can go to the Tmall official online store and other Angry Birds blogs by the links on it.
- In April 2012, Angry Birds attended the eighth Chinese International Cartoon Festival and got much attention (Zhejiang News Online 2012).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Relevant information can reduces risk, increase power and creates competitive advantage. An eligible marketer has to know how to collect the relevant information that the company needs by research, and then make better decisions equipped with this information. (Smith 2011:138)

There are five steps in a research plan:

- Define the research problem
- Make the research plan
- Collect data
- Analyze data
- Make the summary and report. (Sabel 2010)

The research problems have already been shown in Chapter 1, and in the following, the research method, data collection method and data analysis method will be presented.

4.1 Research Method

There are two types of research sources: primary and secondary. The secondary data are information that already exists, and in this thesis such information was presented in the first three chapters. On the other hand, primary data is gathered specifically for a particular purpose, and in this thesis it is the data collected by the questionnaire. (Smith 2011:141)

There are two types of research: quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative research is a flexible method that allows the respondents to reflect upon and express their views – it is used to seek the feelings and experiences of the respondents (Sabel 2010), whereas qualitative research asks questions like "Why do you like this promotion tool", quantitative research asks large surveys numerical questions such as "Who", "What", "Where", "When", and "How" (Smith 2011:145-146). It often performs as a structured questionnaire given to a sample of a population and designed to elicit specific information from respondents. Quantitative research is

also the most common method of primary data collection in marketing research. (Sabel 2010)

Figure 9 from Qualitative Data Analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994: 40) gives a detailed description of the features of qualitative and quantitative research:

Qualitative	Quantitative
The aim is a complete, detailed description.	The aim is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed.
Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for.	Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for.
Researcher is the data gathering instrument.	Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data.
Data is in the form of words, pictures or objects.	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics.
Subjective: e.g. uses participant observation, in-depth interviews etc.	Objective: e.g. uses surveys, questionnaires etc.
Qualitative data is more 'rich', time consuming, and less able to be generalized.	Quantitative data is more efficient, able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail.

Figure 9. Features of qualitative & quantitative research (Miles & Huberman 1994: 40)

As this research needs to collect primary data from a large number of audiences in an efficient way, the quantitative research is decided to be the main method for it.

4.2 Data Collection

Typical quantitative data gathering methods include:

- experiments
- observing
- obtaining relevant data from information systems

- surveys with closed-ended questions (e.g., face-to-face and telephone interview, questionnaire etc) (Uwec 2012)

Among these methods, the survey is the most common one, and it will be used in this research.

4.2.1 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are a popular survey means of collecting data as it has following advantages:

- It can cover a large number of people or organizations.
- It has wide geographic coverage.
- It is relatively cheap.
- No prior arrangements are needed.
- It can avoid embarrassment on the part of the respondent.
- Respondent can consider responses. (Tvu 2012)

In this study, a survey based on a questionnaire is conducted, which is an effective way of quantifying data from a sample group.

4.2.2 Questionnaire Design and Release

Based on the research problems, the questionnaire is divided into three sectors: basic information; attitude to promotion and promotion tools; awareness of Angry Birds and its merchandise (See APPENDIX 1: Original Chinese Questionnaire or APPENDIX 2: Translated English Questionnaire). In order to make it easier to understand the professional questions, the Original Chinese Questionnaire was enclosed with many explanations for each option.

The questionnaire was created with the online-survey website Ask Form. The finished questionnaire is published as a web-link via many approaches: The "notice" links sent by author's individual social network site homepage; direct mails and chatting software. A total of 325 links were sent and 133 responses have been received during one week. Only 3 respondents are uncompleted, the rest are all completed and adopted.

For this research, the sampling method is judgmental sampling. It means that the author chooses the sample based on who she thinks would be appropriate for the study (Sabel 2010). As all the link receivers are traditional customers, young persons aged 16-35, China Mainland residents, Internet users, and educated persons, the results are reliable to a great extent. In addition, in the beginning of the third sector of the questionnaire, a filter question: "Do you know the brand Angry Birds?" removed 6 people who answered "No" from the rest of the questionnaire, which makes the data of the third sector more trustworthy.

4.3 Data Analyzing Methods

In this study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and Windows Excel were adopted as the tools to analyze the data. Firstly, the 130 of the responses are exported and downloaded from the Ask Form website in an Excel version, and then it imported into the SPSS. All the data and charts are produced by the SPSS and Excel. Survey results are presented in the sharps of pie graphs (percentage figures), bar graphs (frequency figures), and the descriptions by words.

4.4 Reliability and Validity

Reliability tells that how reproducible the measures are on a retest; Validity represents how well a variable measures what it is supposed to (Hopkins 2012). In this research, reliability is supported by the relevance between the theoretical study with the questionnaire content and the coherence between the empirical findings with the existing findings. Meanwhile, the validity of the research is improved by the great number of references within the whole thesis process.

5. EMPIRICAL FINDING

The questionnaire is divided into three sectors: basic information; attitude to promotion and promotion tools; awareness of Angry Birds and its merchandise. Therefore, the empirical finding is also presented by the relevant three sections: basic information finding, marketing communication finding, and brand awareness finding. All the quantitative results are shown by charts and tables.

5.1 Basic Information Finding

The basic information questions include gender, age, occupation, and living city size. All of them are single-choice questions and illustrated by pie charts.

Gender (Graph 1)

Among the total of 130 respondents, the number of female is 74 (57%), while the number of male is 56 (43%), as shown in Graph 1. This difference in percentage is reliable since the gender situation of all 325 link-receivers is almost the same.
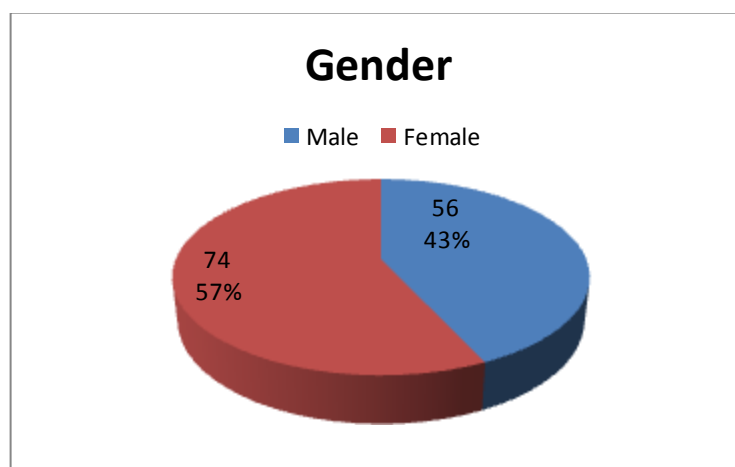

**Graph 1.** Respondents' gender pie chart

Age and Occupation (Graph 2 & 3)

The questionnaires are targeting mainly at young students as they are the largest group which appropriates the judgmental sampling in this research. It can explain the overwhelming majority of the age group 18-25 (83%) and the occupation

student (67.7%). As a matter of course, the age group 25-30 (10%) and the occupation of work (29%) rank the second. As shown in Graph 2 and Graph 3.
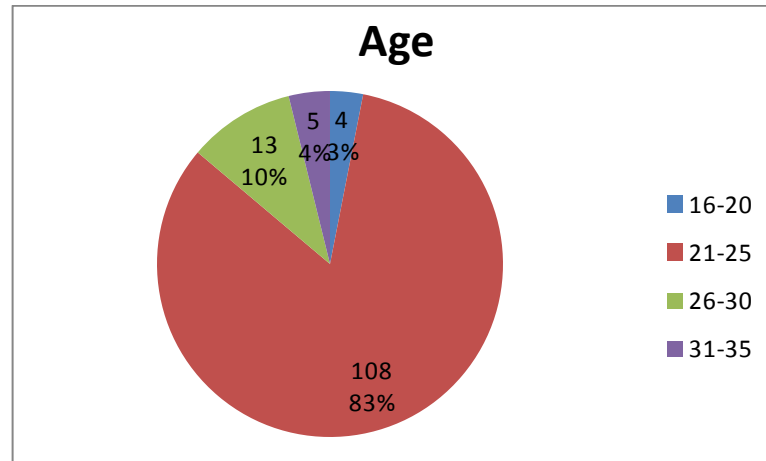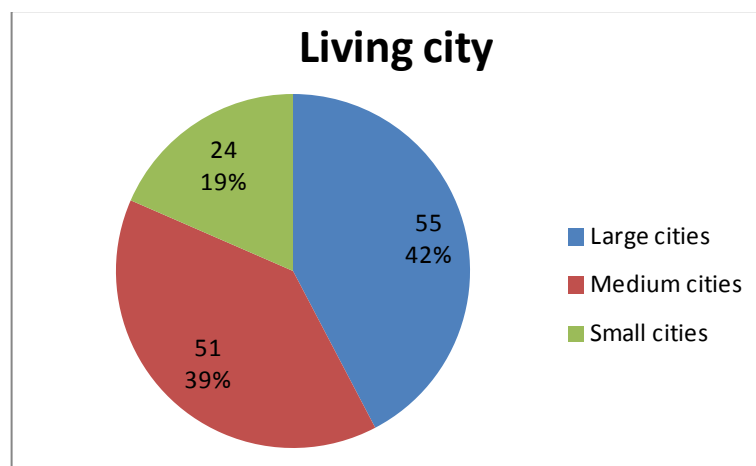

Graph 2. Respondents' age pie chart
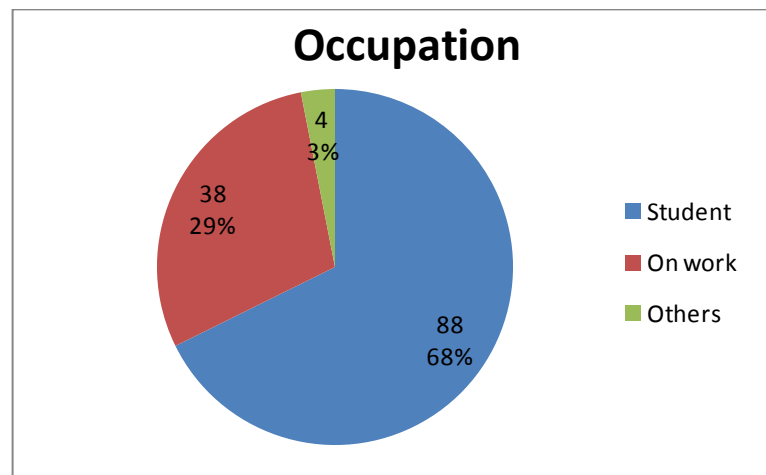
Graph 3. Respondents' occupation pie chart

Living cities (Graph 4)

It is necessary to collect the information of respondents' living cities as cities in different sizes have big differences in economic situation, marketing communication facilities, information spreading power, customer behaviors, etc. China has the largest population in the world, as a result, the criteria for city size in this research is: Large cities (population – more than 3 million); Medium cities (population – between 1 to 3 million); Small cities (population – less than 1 million). As shown in Graph 4, the number of the respondents from big and

medium cities is similar (42% & 39%) and these two groups occupy most of the whole pie. It is suitable for this study as most of the Angry Birds businesses and their marketing communication activities would be launched in big and medium cities in China.

Graph 4. Respondents' living cities pie chart

5.2 Marketing Communication Finding

The marketing communication finding aims at collecting information of Chinese customers' general opinions to promotion and promotion tools for game and cartoon merchandise.

Factors influence buying game and cartoon merchandise (Graph 5)

Question 5 is aimed to find out respondents' opinions on the influencing elements towards their game and cartoon merchandise purchasing decisions. They are asked to choose one from "Very weak", "Weak", "Average", "Strong", "Very strong" for the four marketing elements: product, price, purchase channel, and promotion. As shown in Graph 5, element Product is obviously the most important factor in the respondents' purchasing decisions, and then is the Price. The opinions "Very strong", "Strong", and "Weak" are almost the same in element Place and Promotion. However, "Average" number of Place is beyond that of Promotion and "Very weak" number of Place is less than that of Promotion. Although Promotion is ranking as the least important one of the 4Ps, it releases a fact that

the game and cartoon merchandise marketing communication force in China is not powerful enough and still has wide development areas.

Factors influence buying merchandise	Very weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very strong	Total
Product	1	1	7	39	82	130
Price	1	3	29	78	19	130
Place	4	28	47	41	10	130
Promotion	11	30	36	41	12	130

Graph 5. Respondents' opinions to 4Ps in buying game and cartoon merchandise

Opinions on promotion tools (Graph 6)

This is a multi-choice question and the respondents can choose at least one among the five promotion tools which were introduced in Chapter 2 and an "Other" option. The result is shown in Graph 6 and it is obvious that advertising and sales promotion are the most popular promotion tools. This result should be reliable since these two promotion tools are the most common ones in China. Today, Chinese customers get in touch with advertising anytime and anywhere, and advertising influences not only their buying behaviors but also their lifestyles. Sales promotion is also widely used since customers always like "get more and spend less". In China, the various festivals and the multiple demographic compositions also provide large amount of chances for sales promotion activities.

Public relations and direct marketing respectively rank third and fourth, while they have indeed been developing fast in the recent years in China, especially among young customer. Since privacy and integrity problems, personal selling in China is not as popular as other promotion tools.
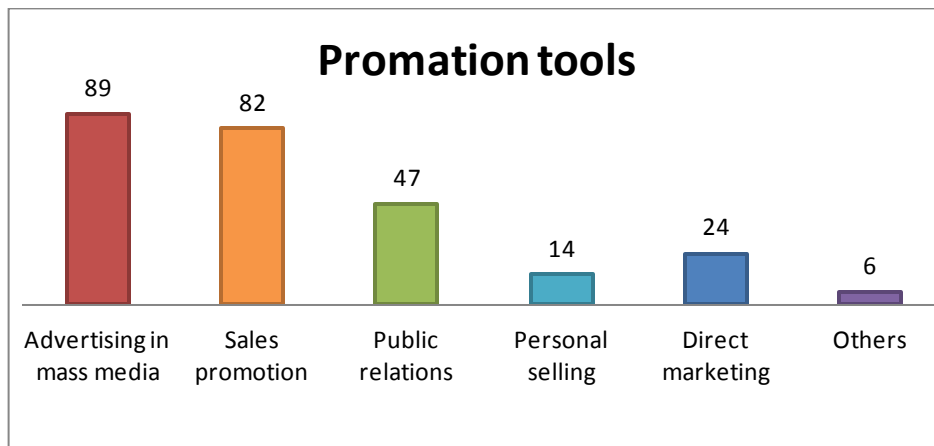
Graph 6. Respondents' opinions on promotion tools

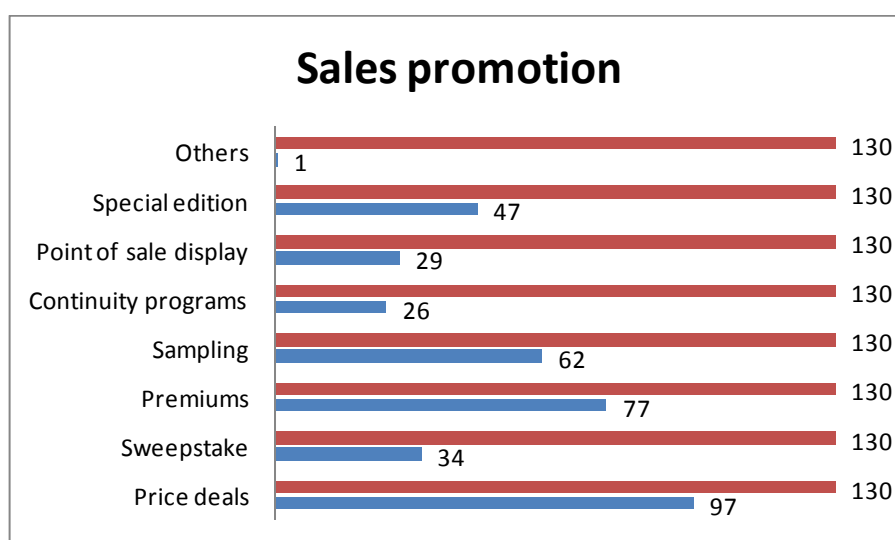**Opinions to different types of every promotion tool (Graph 7 – 11)**

The objective of questions 7 to 11 is to obtain information about the most welcomed types in every promotion tool for game and cartoon merchandise. Chapter 2 has introduced the common types in advertising, sales promotion, public relations, personal selling, and direct marketing. In spite of the budget, coordination and control, the research just focuses on their power and influences from Chinese customers' views. All these questions are multi-choice questions and the respondents need to choose at least one of the options.
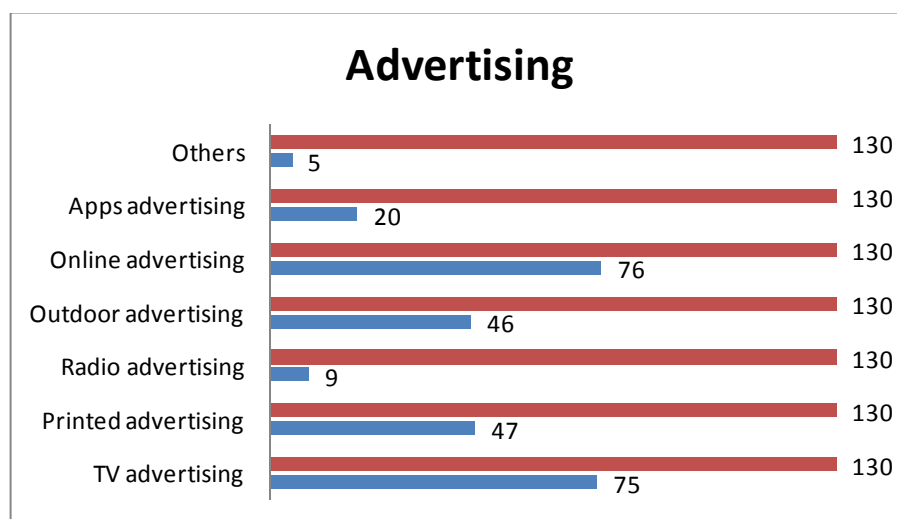
Graph 7. Respondents' attitude to advertising types

As Graph 7 shows, TV and the Internet are the most popular advertising media. According to China Today (2011), by the end of 2010, the number of Chinese internet users had increased to 457 million in total. Chinese State Council Information Office (2012) stated that by November 2011, China's internet penetration rate has reached 33.9%, which is more than world average penetration rate (30%). Chinese State Administration of Radio Film and Television (2012) showed that, in 2011 the national television population coverage rate is 97.82% and Chinese digital TV users have reached 115 million households. The popularizing rate of the Internet and TV is particular high among young people and students.

Although the choices of Apps advertising are less, the Apps are the main vehicle of Angry Birds. Therefore, the importance of Apps advertising cannot be ignored.

Sales promotion

Category	Blue	Red
Others	1	130
Special edition	47	130
Point of sale display	29	130
Continuity programs	26	130
Sampling	62	130
Premiums	77	130
Sweepstake	34	130
Price deals	97	130

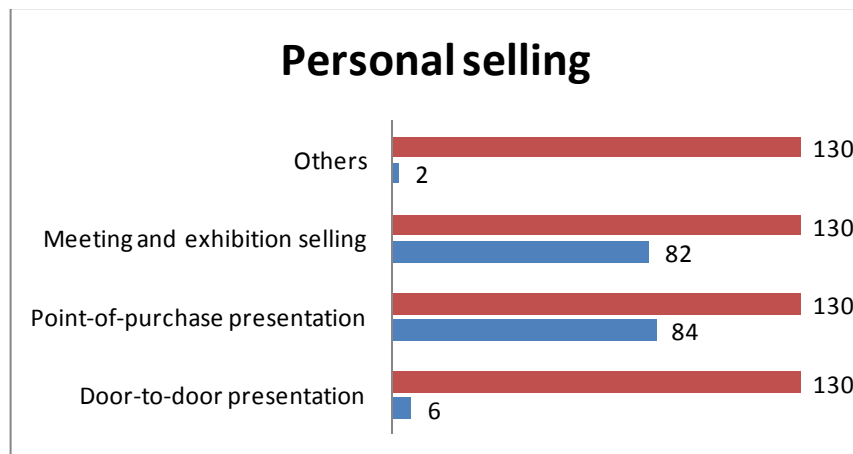**Graph 8.** Respondents' attitude to sales promotion types

Refer to Graph 8, in sales promotion options, price deals is a more popular choice than other sales promotion methods, while premiums and sampling are also welcomed by respondents. Because of the high price of the genuine game and cartoon merchandise, discounts and other price deals are often used in their sales promotion activities. Another popular special promotion tool for cultural merchandise is the special edition. It promotes cultural merchandise by the

product itself rather than the low price – it is suitable for the high-consumption customers.
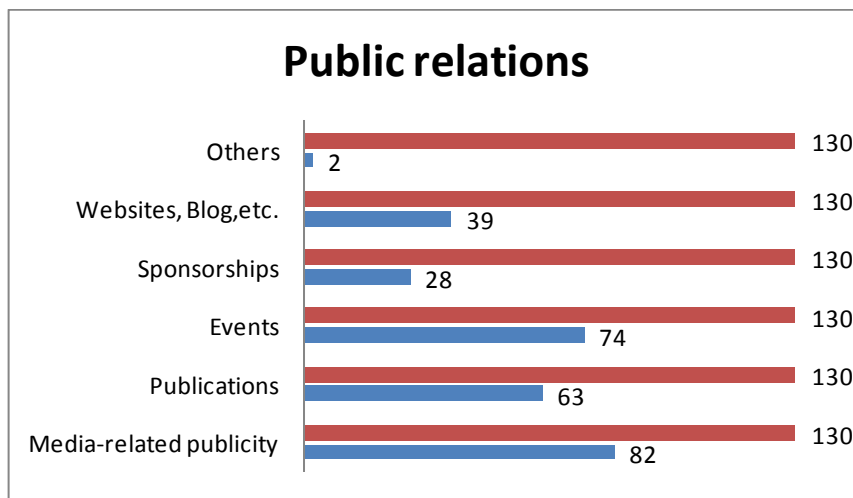
**Graph 9.** Respondents' attitude to public relations types

Public relations have many new types within the development of mass media; hence the media-related publicity is widely accepted by customers. Event always attract people's attentions and it is selected by more than half of the respondents as shown in Graph 9.

Graph 10. Respondents' attitude to personal selling types

The result of question 6 shows that personal selling is the most unacceptable promotion tools among the respondents, but it also necessary in promotion activities, especially for new products just like Angry Birds. Door-to-door

personal selling is neither welcomed nor suitable for game and cartoon merchandise, but personal selling in exhibitions and points of purchase is accepted by most of the respondents as shown in Graph 10.
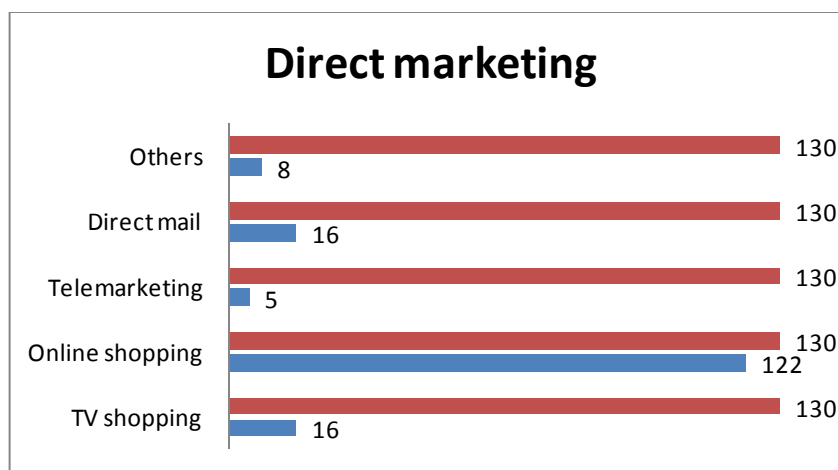
**Graph 11.**Respondents' attitude to direct marketing types

Online shopping is very popular in China now; many game and cartoon brands have their own online shops, also Angry Birds. Compared other direct marketing channels, online shopping has the absolute advantage since it almost got the full choices.

5.3 Brand Awareness Finding

The brand awareness finding presents the situations of the respondents' awareness of Angry Birds and their attitudes to Angry Birds merchandise business in China. These findings can help in specializing in the marketing communication information which obtained in the second sector of the questionnaire.

Awareness of Angry Birds (Graph 12 & Graph 13)

As a world-wide popular game and brand, Angry Birds is known by 95% of the respondents as shown in Graph 12. This is a good foundation for Rovio to promote Angry Birds business in China, since its awareness is very high among young people.
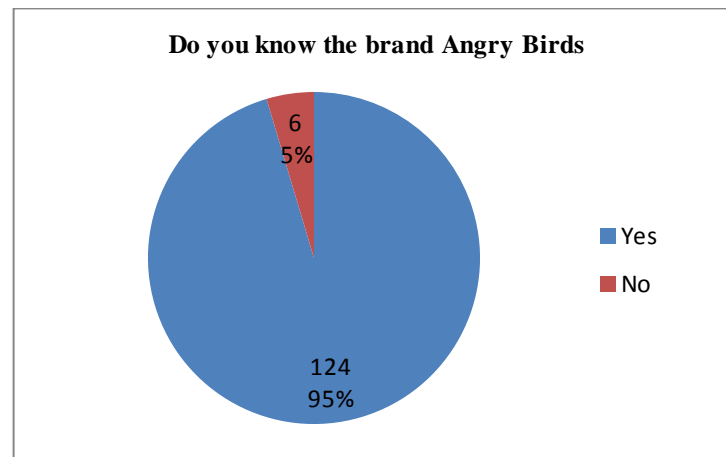
**Graph 12.** Respondents' awareness of Angry Birds

Graph 13 shows the information of the six respondents who do not know Angry Birds. It is obvious that the main common features of them are aged 31-35 and working. There are five people aged 31-35 in total, four of which (80%) do not know Angry Birds – it would be a marketing communication emphasis. Although people above 30 are not the main customers of game and cartoon merchandise, Rovio cannot ignore that they hold the main purchasing power for children under 10, and furthermore, most of them are working with a higher income level. Marketing communication – especially the promotions with child care topics – are necessary for customers aged above 30.

Gender	Age	Occupation	City
Male	21-25	Student	Large cities
Male	21-25	On work	Large cities
Female	31-35	On work	Medium cities
Female	31-35	On work	Small cities
Female	31-35	On work	Medium cities
Female	31-35	Others	Small cities

Graph 13. Respondents who do not know Angry Birds

**The ways to know Angry Birds (Graph 14)**

Question 13 is a multi-choice question and it lists some common approaches for spreading Angry Birds information. The frequently-used ways can also be used for Angry Birds merchandise marketing communications as they are efficient, such as Apps in mobile phones, on the Internet and words-of-mouth, which shown in Graph 14. Since the main platforms of Angry Birds are Apps and the Internet, it is easy to understand the importance of them in the marketing communication of Angry Birds merchandise. In China, words-of-mouth is also a common way in information delivering, since the large population and the Chinese life habits. At the same time, the other approaches should also be judged and developed professionally.
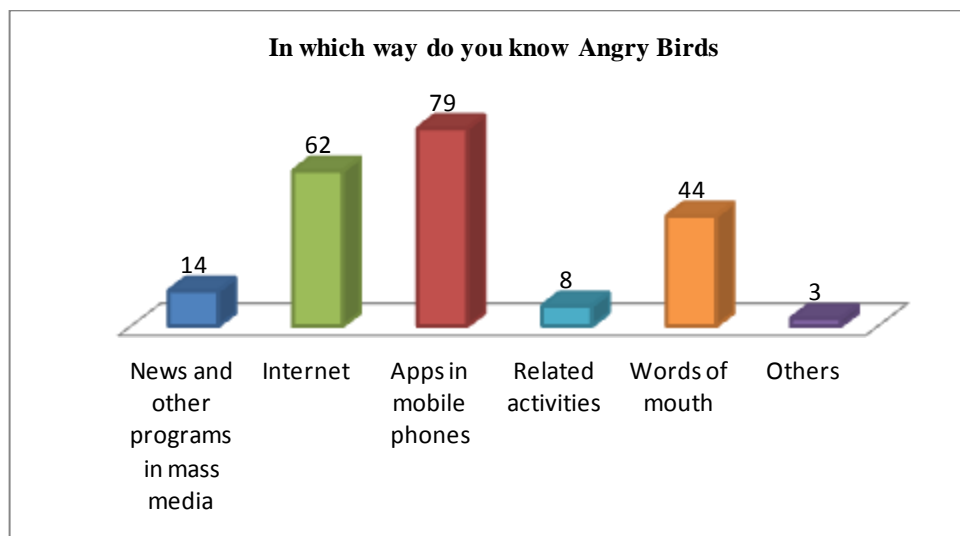
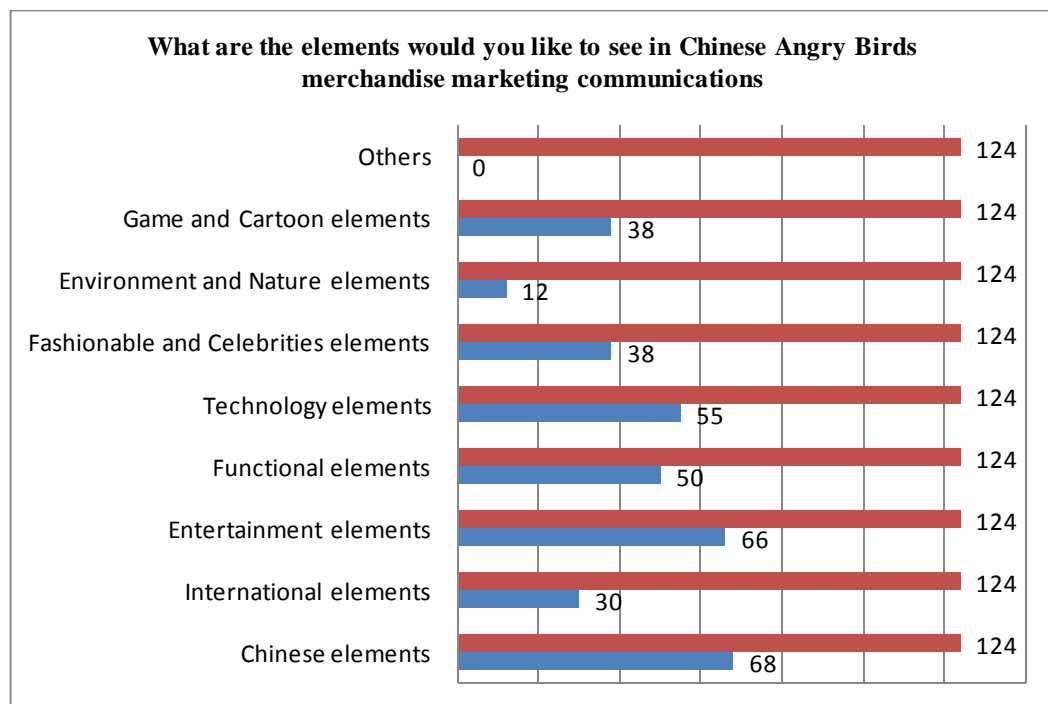**Graph 14.** The ways for respondents to know Angry Birds

The intention to purchase Angry Birds merchandise (Graph 15)

This research does not ask respondents whether they are Angry Birds players or Angry Birds fans, since Angry Birds is a casual game with favored images, many ordinary customers may have the intention to purchase Angry Birds merchandise. As Graph 15 shown, for question 14, 56% of the respondents said that they have the intention to purchase Angry Birds merchandise. It reveals that Angry Birds merchandise has a big market among young Chinese customers and there is still a lot of space for development. Marketing communication is the main factor for this development in the future.

Do you have the intention to purchase Angry Birds merchandise

54
44%

70
56%

Yes
No
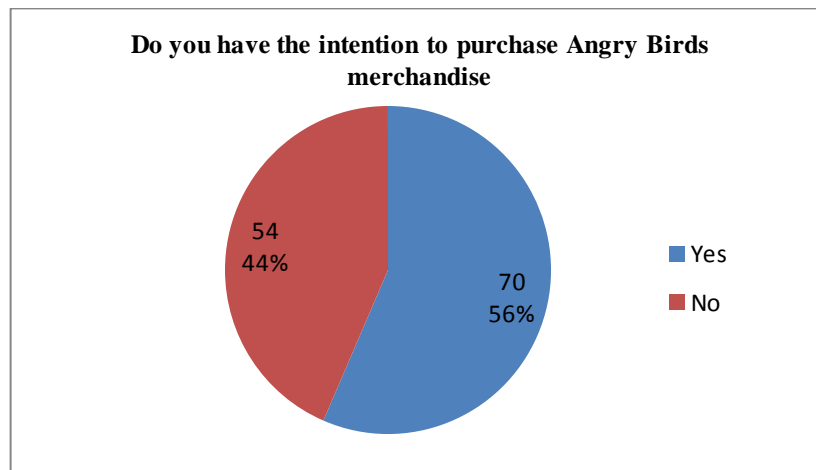
Graph 15. Respondents' intention to purchase Angry Birds merchandise

China's Angry Birds merchandise marketing communication elements (Graph 16)

What are the elements would you like to see in Chinese Angry Birds merchandise marketing communications

Element	Blue	Red
Others	0	124
Game and Cartoon elements	38	124
Environment and Nature elements	12	124
Fashionable and Celebrities elements	38	124
Technology elements	55	124
Functional elements	50	124
Entertainment elements	66	124
International elements	30	124
Chinese elements	68	124

Graph 16. The elements that the respondents would like to see in China's Angry Birds merchandise marketing communications

Successful international marketing communication should cater to the local customers' tastes. Question 15 lists several elements in marketing communication and the respondents can choose the ones which they want to see in China's Angry

Birds merchandise promotions. Most of the elements are welcomed by the respondents, especially the choices of Chinese elements and entertainment elements collect both over half of the total responses, as shown in Graph 16. Much work has been already done by Rovio in marketing communicating with the Chinese customers (see Chapter 3), and it needs to combine the various elements that the Chinese customers favor.

6. CONCLUSION

The last chapter is the conclusion. After the exploration of theoretical concepts, practical analysis, and questionnaire finding, the final summary of the research and the recommendations to this case can be concludes.

6.1 Conclusion of the Research

The research aims at providing suggestions to Rovio about Angry Birds merchandise marketing communication in China. The objectives of the research can be reached as the approach shows by Figure 10.
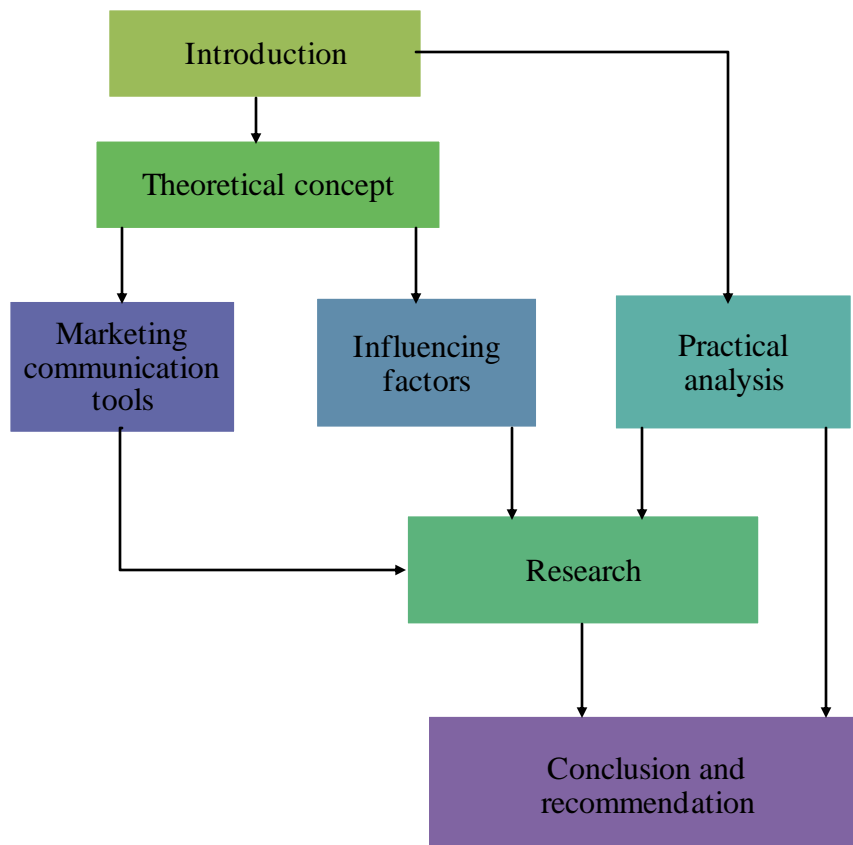

Figure 10. The outline of the thesis

The research problem can be divided into the following three areas:

- For game and cartoon merchandise, which promotion tools are most accepted one by Chinese customers?
- How do Chinese audiences think about Angry Birds and its merchandise?

Which tools most effectively improve their awareness of the Angry Birds brand?

- How to make the promotion tools suitable for the Chinese situation and cater to the taste of the Chinese customers?

According to the empirical finding, the research problems are solved by the following results:

- Among the five main promotion tools, advertising and sales promotion are the most popular ones in game and cartoon merchandise's marketing communication. Furthermore, in advertising, online advertising and TV advertising are the most welcomed types; while in sales promotion, people prefer price deals, premiums and sampling.

- The awareness of Angry Birds in China is very high, and more than half of respondents express that they have the intention to buy the merchandise – this fact is a good foundation for launching marketing communication activities. In China, most people know Angry Birds by Apps, the Internet and words-of-mouth – they are also the foundations for developing a marketing communication strategy.

- In Angry Birds merchandise's marketing communication program, Chinese people would like to see more elements concerning Chinese traditions, entertainment, technology and function.

6.2 Advice to Angry Birds

On the basis of the conducted research study, it is possible to summarize several pieces of advice to Angry Birds merchandise for its marketing communication in China.

- Compared with other 3Ps, promotion is not the most important marketing mix, but it is significant in a new market place. Angry Birds needs to build a good marketing communication relationship with the Chinese customers first.

- The research finding and the facts in China show that in promotion tools, advertising and sale promotion should be applied vastly as they are the most

common and popular approaches in China, and meanwhile, all the promotion tools should be well coordinated. Angry Birds can also try some new methods to attract some special purchasing groups.

- New media such as the Internet and Apps are particular efficient in China now, especially among young people. Advertisements on free-edition Apps, online shopping channels, and online advertising and publicity are all the chances for Angry Birds merchandise marketing communication.

- For an entertainment brand, its international marketing communication should pay much attention to culture and entertainment features. The Chinese elements and the entertainment element should be emphasized in the process of promotion so that the Chinese customers can feel the respect and fun at the same time.

- The marketing communication foundation for Angry Birds merchandise in China is satisfactory. Angry Birds should have confidence in its merchandise business.

6.3 Suggestions for Future Study

At the end of this thesis, some suggestions and thoughts that are realized in the research process are presented:

- Game and cartoon merchandise is a new business, while marketing communication is also a developing field. How to develop a new business with new concepts and methods is a great difficulty the author came across. Further study should bring more knowledge into practice.

- As Chapter 1 stated, the main objective limitation of the research is that there are no interviews or other methods used for data collecting other than the online questionnaire. For this reason, all the findings are limited by the questionnaire and the Internet. Future study should apply the various research methods more flexible.

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APPENDIX 1:

Original Chinese Questionnaire

"愤怒的小鸟"商品在中国的市场营销调研

"愤怒的小鸟"作为一款风靡全球的手机休闲游戏，其周边商品也受到了很多人的喜爱，"愤怒的小鸟"专卖店也即将登陆中国。这是一份针对"愤怒的小鸟"周边商品在中国市场的营销传播的调查问卷，大约会占用您 5 分钟时间填写，一切信息均不对外公开，感谢您的参与！

1. 性别*

   ○ 男

   ○ 女

2. 年龄*

   ○ 16-20

   ○ 21-25

   ○ 26-30

   ○ 31-35

3. 职业*

   ○ 学生

   ○ 在职

   ○ 其他

4. 居住城市类型*

   ○ 大型城市（人口300万以上）

   ○ 中型城市（人口100-300万）

   ○ 小型城市（人口100万以下）

以下问题是关于您对周边产品的营销方式的看法

5. 如果购买某一领域（游戏，动漫，明星，运动等）的正版周边产品（玩具，服装，书籍等），您觉得下列因素的重要性：*

	完全不重要	比较不重要	一般	比较重要	非常重要
产品本身	○	○	○	○	○
价格	○	○	○	○	○
购买渠道	○	○	○	○	○
促销手段	○	○	○	○	○

6. 周边产品的营销传播方式，您倾向于：*

☐ 媒体上的广告（电视，网络，书刊等）

☐ 促销（打折，抽奖，限量版等）

☐ 公共活动（公益活动，发布会，展览，赞助等）

☐ 人员推销（销售人员在特定地点的展示讲解）

☐ 直销（电视购物，网购，电话购物等）

☐ 其它 _____

7. 周边产品的广告类型，您倾向于：*

☐ 电视广告

☐ 印刷物广告

☐ 广播广告

☐ 室外广告（宣传板，宣传车等）

☐ 网络广告

☐ 手机应用程序广告

☐ 其它 _____

8. 周边产品的促销形式中，您倾向于：*

☐ 打折

☐ 抽奖

☐ 赠品

☐ 产品试用

☐ 会员制

☐ 销售点展示

☐ 限量版

☐ 其它 _____

9. 周边产品的公共宣传类型，您倾向于：*

☐ 媒体宣传（社论，采访，电视节目，电影等）

☐ 出版物宣传（小册子，杂志等）

☐ 活动（文化类体育类娱乐类公共活动）

☐ 赞助

☐ 论坛，个人主页，博客等

☐ 其它 _____

10. 周边产品的个人销售中，您倾向于：*

☐ 上门推销

☐ 销售点推销

☐ 展销会推销

☐ 其它 _____

11. 周边产品的直销方式，您倾向于：*

☐ 电视购物

☐ 网购

☐ 电话购物

☐ 邮件信件购物

☐ 其它 _____

以下是您对"愤怒的小鸟"周边商品的了解程度

12. 您是否知道"愤怒的小鸟"？*

○ 知道

○ 不知道

13. 您是何如知道"愤怒的小鸟"的？*

☐ 新闻等电视节目

☐ 网络

☐ 手机应用程序

☐ 相关活动

☐ 口口相传

☐ 其它 _____

14. 您有购买"愤怒的小鸟"周边商品的欲望吗？*

○ 有

○ 没有 _____

15. 在"愤怒的小鸟"周边商品在中国的市场传播中，您希望看到哪些元素：*

☐ 中国化元素

☐ 国际化元素

☐ 娱乐元素

☐ 实用性元素

☐ 科技元素

☐ 时尚名人

☐ 自然环保

☐ 动漫卡通

☐ 其它 _____

16. 您对"愤怒的小鸟"周边商品的在中国的推广有什么意见或建议：

_____

提交成功，谢谢您的参与！

APPENDIX 2:

Translated English Questionnaire

Marketing Communication Research of Angry Birds Merchandise in China

As a worldwide popular game, Angry Birds is welcomed by large amount of people, as well as its merchandise such as toys, clothes, living goods and so on. The Angry Birds shop would be landed in China soon. This is a research of Angry Birds Merchandise in China based on the Marketing Communication concept. It will take you about five minutes to fill in, and all the personal information wouldn't be published. Thank you for your participation!

1. Please choose your gender.*

   Male

   Female

2. Please choose your age.*

   16-20

   21-25

   26-30

   31-35

3. Please choose your occupation.*

   Student

   On work

   Others

4. What kind of city do you live in China?*

   Large cities (population: more than 3 million)

   Medium cities (population: 1-3 million)

   Small cities (population: less than 1 million)

The question 5-11 are about your opinions to Marketing Communication of Game and Cartoon Merchandise in China

5. How much do the following factors influence you when you are purchasing the game and cartoon merchandise (toys, clothes or publication)?*

	Very weak	Weak	Average	Strong	Very strong
Product	○	○	○	○	○
Price	○	○	○	○	○
Purchase channel	○	○	○	○	○
Promotion	○	○	○	○	○

6. In which way do you tend to obtain the information of merchandise? (Multi-choice)*

   Advertising in mass media

   Sales promotion

   Public relations

   Personal selling

   Direct marketing

7. What kinds of advertising do you prefer (Multi-choice)*

   TV advertising

   Printed advertising

   Radio advertising

   Outdoor advertising

   Online advertising

   Apps advertising

   Others: _____

8. What kinds of sales promotion do you prefer (Multi-choice)*

   Price deals

   Sweepstake

   Premiums

   Sampling

   Continuity programs

   Point of sale display

   Special edition

   Others: _____

9. What kinds of public relations do you prefer (Multi-choice)*

   Media-related publicity

   Publications

Events

Sponsorships

Websites, Blog, Facebook and Twitter (Chinese version)

Others: _____

10. What kinds of personal selling do you prefer (Multi-choice)*

Door-to-door presentation

Point-of-purchase presentation

Meeting and exhibition selling

Others: _____

11. What kinds of direct marketing do you prefer (Multi-choice)*

TV shopping

Online shopping

Telemarketing

Direct mail

Others: _____

The questions 12-16 are about your opinions to Angry Birds and its merchandise

12. Do you know the brand Angry Birds?*

Yes

No (questionnaire over)

13. In which way do you know Angry Birds? (Multi-choice)*

News and other programs in mass media

Internet

Apps in mobile phones

Related activities

Words-of-mouth

Others: _____

14. Do you have intention to purchase the Angry Birds merchandise?*

Yes

No: _____

15. What are the elements would you like to see in China's Angry Birds merchandise marketing communications? (Multi-choice)*

Chinese elements

International elements

Entertainment elements

Functional elements

Technology elements

Fashionable and Celebrities elements

Environment and Nature elements

Game and Cartoon elements

Others: _____

16. Do you have any suggestions to Angry Birds merchandise promotion?

Thank you for your time!