



# **MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR RELATIONSHIPGAMES**

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## ABSTRACT

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<p>There is no doubt to admit that marketing communications are the key element for every kind of business to reach audiences and to improve brand's reputation. Since the development of marketing after years and regular changes in market, companies need to make a plan for marketing campaign in different ways that is appropriate for their business condition.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is to define integrated marketing communications term (IMC) and to deploy a social media &amp; PR strategy for the case company RelationshipGames. For the young history of RelationshipGames, the company is still in developing period before achieving good position in game industry.</p> <p>In order to fulfill the research for this study, data collection is conducted through primary sources like representatives interviews and secondary data such as text books, electric journals and reports.</p>		

This plan was built respectively from general concepts into deep details of marketing communication. During progress of doing this study, important discussion and decisions were made between the author and RelationshipGames CEO Mari Parviainen to establish a proper plan for current the company's situation. Hopefully, this study contributes valuable ideas to their future plan.

**Key words**

Marketing communications, RelationshipGames, social media communications

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Besides, I would like to give my deep gratitude to my thesis supervisor Mr. Janne Peltoniemi, my thesis advisor Ms. Ann-Christine Johnsson and all teaching staffs in my school.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Marketing communications or integrated marketing communications is a term which deals with communication methods in a market. That is a basic perception about the words “marketing communications”, but many people consider marketing communications as the “promotion” in “4Ps marketing mix”. In this thesis, a marketing communication plan for the case company RelationshipGames is built and developed based on those above perceptions. The main objective of this plan is to design a media promotion strategy for RelationshipGames, especially social networking development.

The theory part of this study comes up by the “funnel” model. That means it starts from broad ideas then ends by specific details. Basic concepts about marketing are introduced initially, including the marketing mix 4Ps. The next part is a profound overview of integrated marketing communication and it connects to marketing communication media section. The last thing in the theory part is integrated marketing communication planning which is the based structure to build a plan for the case company in empirical analysis.

The limitation of empirical part in this thesis is focusing on PR and social networking operation of the case company; other marketing activities such as sale promotion, advertising or sponsorship are skipped because those are not taking parts in the plan of RelationshipGames. Due to a change of market situation and audiences’ trends, the real implemented plan may need changes and the evaluation of media strategy is just forecast.

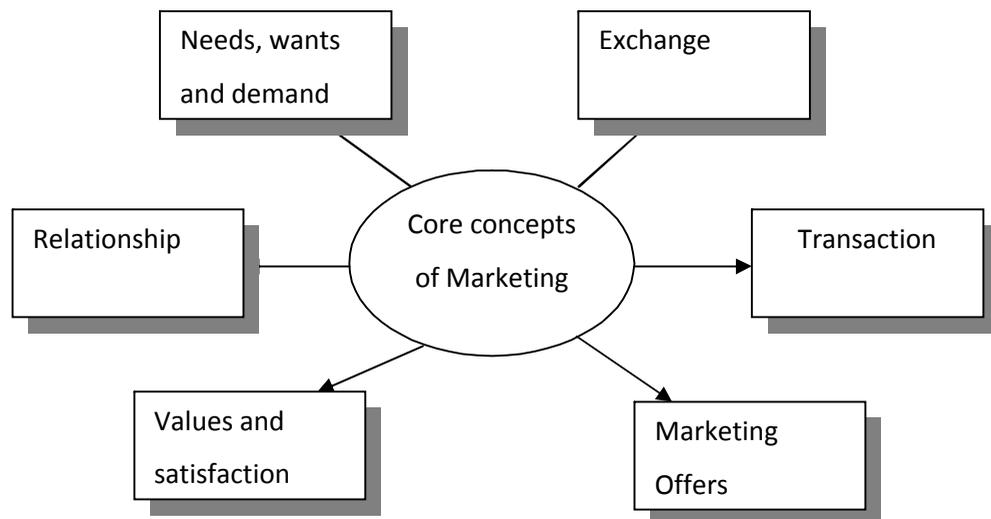
In term of methodology, two big textbooks about marketing provide core literatures, along with other up-to-date e-books and e-journals. RelationshipGames CEO – Mari Parviainen was interviewed and held discussions with the author to figure out ideas and structure for the plan. Valuable information, ideas were processed and combined into an integrated plan after those meetings.

## 2 MARKETING FUNDAMENTALS

### 2.1 Marketing core concepts

Marketing is not a strange perception nowadays; in fact, it exists around us and involves in variety of our daily activities. When you go to supermarket for shopping, favorite brands consideration should be always made in your mind. In workplace, communication, interaction, exchanging ideas with co-worker is an inevitable activity. Even in the early morning on weekdays, you are waked up by an alarm clock which is the promotion for you to achieve the simply goal-punctuality in working (Hundekar, Reddy, Appannaiah & Ramanath 2010, 1).

Concept of marketing is a broad term and there is plenty of definition about marketing. Basically, marketing is derived from “selling” and “market” that are involved in trade and advertising activities. As the father of marketing management, Philip Kotler defined marketing as a management process of satisfying customer’s needs profitably.



*Figure 1. Core marketing concepts*

*(Hundekar, Reddy, Appannaiah & Ramanath et al. 2010, 7)*

In general, the main marketing concepts comprise following categories:

- *“Needs” are fundamental requirements—the ultimate goal of marketing.* Needs bias to something related to survival, for example, human and animals need water and food to be alive.
- *“Wants” can be understood as the desire to satisfy needs.*
- *“Demands” is concerned to buying willingness; it is also a vital factor to examine whether marketing is successful.*
- *“Exchange” is an act of obtaining a desired product or service from manufacturers to the final consumers.*
- *“Transaction” is the completion, agreement of the exchange step between buyer and seller.*
- *“Marketing” offers could be defined as the set of benefits offered to customers to satisfy their needs.*
- *“Value and satisfaction” refer to the perception and evaluation of customers about product quality, service and price.*
- *“Relationship” is a term which is aimed to maintain long-term relations with customers, suppliers and distributors .*

(Hundekar, Reddy, Appannaiah & Ramanath et al. 2010, 7-9)

## **2.2 Marketing mix and the 4Ps**

The initial general concept of marketing mix was defined by Neil Borden in 1953, after that it was published on his article “The Concept of the Marketing Mix” in 1964. After James Cullition described the role of a marketing manager as a “mixer of ingredients”, Borden linked his perception in his term of teaching to James’s recipe. (Gordon, 2011)

In 1960, Jerome McCarthy proposed a four Ps term which is popularized nowadays in almost of marketing book. The 4Ps theory comprises product, price, place and promotion. After years of development in marketing, there are

some alternative models of marketing such as 5Ps, 7Ps, and 8Ps. They are basically extended from traditional 4Ps then more necessary “P” categories were added like people, process, and physical evidence.

In this study, only the basic 4Ps is represented and promotion is introduced as the fundamental term of marketing communication and social media.

### 2.2.1 4Ps: Product

Product can be a tangible substance or intangible service that is produced or manufactured and offered to consumers in the market. (Gordon et al. 2011)

Theodore Levitt, a professor at Harvard Business School proposed a model in an article on Harvard Business Review to classify the features and benefits of a product; it is called “*The total product concept*”. (Ruskin-Brown, 2006, 106)

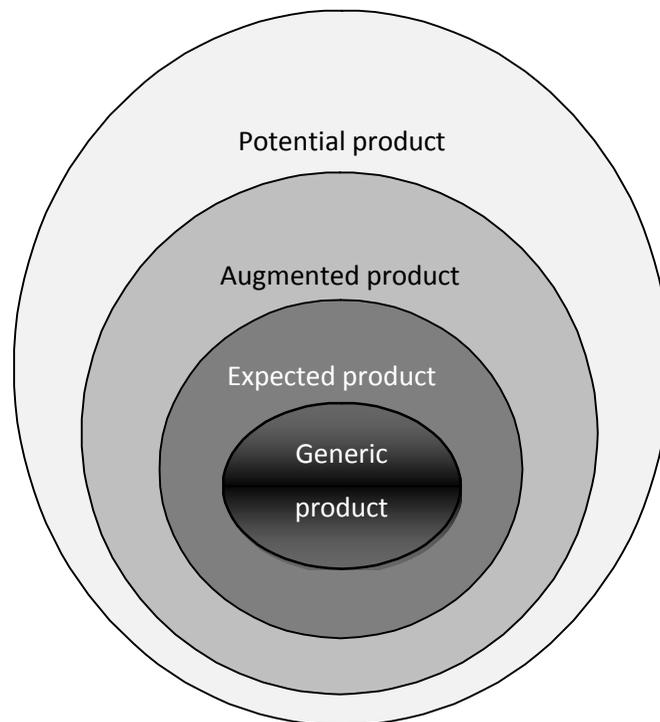


Figure 2. *The Levitt construct* (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 106)

- “*Generic or core product*” is the center of the product. It consists all of certain required features of a product. For example, a car needs engine machine and tires to run or a computer needs chips boards and memory to work. The core elements cover 70% of total product, they are often invisible to the customer but no “generic” – no product existence.
- “*Expected product*” is a perspective consumers make evaluation. For instance, the feedback of clients after several flight services from an airline. Feeling of customers about a new technology after using it. Since consumers have using experience, they tend to have more expectation about products or services.
- “*Augmented product*” is a term refers to motivation that encourages customers in buying. More interesting features, more special offers are added to goods or service to promote the new version of product. It can be seen a lot of examples of this term in shopping mall, supermarket or even in car garages.
- “*Potential product (or reservoir of ideas)*” is a step ahead of idea to compete and make difference with competitors. Innovation is always an important step in product development and it is shaped from reserving new ideas.

(Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 106-111)

### **2.2.2 4Ps: Price**

Price is defined purely as the amount of payment consumers spend on products or services. (Gordon et al. 2011)

To link to the part “*Product*” which discussed about the features classification of products, in this section a relationship of product life cycle and price is explained.

There are basically 5 steps of a product life cycle which starts from Gestation→Introduction→Growth→Maturity→Saturation→Decline. The investment on the product as well as the price offer must be fit properly on each 6 steps to get the best profits. The maturity period of a product is the most intensive competitive time. The investment on a product begins at the introduction part then increase gradually to growth, next, a big investment should be made on that product at maturity and saturation periods in order to contest competitors. After the glory era of a products passed, decline period comes and it is time to lower the investment. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 181-183)

However, not every product is always successful; some goods are even failed at the growth or introduction period. For that reason, marketers must have strategy to recoup their investment in case of product failure. That strategy called “*skimming price*”, it starts from the top of the target market then decrease over time with comparison to competitors, and then finally marketers can give the expectation possibility to retrieve the total investment cost. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 181-183)

### **2.2.3 4Ps: Place**

Place is a term referred to location, logistics and distribution to where a product or service can be represented and purchased. This term consists physical stores, retailer, wholesaler or online shops where provide goods demand to the final consumers. (Gordon et al. 2011)

In general, there are 3 factors to determine the sale location and distribution in a target market: environmental, structural and behavioral.

- “*Environmental*” is like a big picture of a market condition. This is the initial step which is needed to find out before deciding to enter a target market. Analyzing a macro environment can comprise following elements: geographic,

political stability, legal, economic status, environmental, social demographic, technology trend.

- “*Structural*” is an internal factor of a company. It is referred to the size, structure and characteristic of a firm. There are 2 main ways to enter a market: direct and indirect. A small company with less power in a new market can make decision to access a market by their own, while a larger organization with more reputation has more choice from distributors, wholesalers to offer goods to consumers.
- “*Behavioral*” is explained generally as the characteristic of a market, behaviors of customers in buying decision. To profound this dimension, some surveys or analytics about consumers buying trend should be made. For example, realizing the customer’s favorite kinds of product in the new market, tracking goods price fluctuation and being aware that which level of price is the most common.

(Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 116-119)

For a big organization which has location in different markets, the distribution channel plays an important role in supply chain which helps company to deliver goods to consumers, generally it is in term of logistic. The main task of logistic is handling and doing the physical distribution the goods safety and on time to stores, besides, delivering goods via intermediaries-middle man is also an option. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 120&122)

#### **2.2.4 4Ps: Promotion**

Promotion is the big scope of marketing communication. It is defined as the communication methods that marketers utilize in the marketplace including some activities such as advertising, public relation, personal selling and sales promotion. (Gordon et al. 2011)

In promotion, advertising is the key factor. It is like the bridge to connect products and consumers, the main task of advertising is stimulating buyer's decision and improving product's image. Besides, there are some techniques in advertising including clearly formed of words and product information, price offer and attractive images that is aimed to convince customers purchase decision. American Advertising Association mentioned "*Nobody likes advertisements until they require information*". (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 140&141)

Besides, public relation (PR) is a vital step to improve the reputation of brand, and the sub-activity of this step is editorial publicity (EP) which involves in writing articles or stories about your brand. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 139). With the blast of mass media and plenty of option in communication methods today, PR is an excellent tool in marketing, for example, getting in touch some magazines to publish articles about your products during your marketing campaign period.

Apart from a big range of communication methods, some challenges in this activity still exist. As we know, customers have different perception as well as background knowledge, so they have different judgments about the represented advertising and PR, some people are satisfied, but others may have complaints. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 143)

Promotion is effective initially if consumers are aware of the given product, then they are whether convinced to make purchase decision depending on the marketing communication strategy. After the purchase decision is made, the task of promotion is to hold their buying regularly then becoming loyalty customer. Investment on repeat customers is always easier and cheaper than getting new customers, so once promotion helps a company achieves numerous loyalty consumers, that is truly successful promotion. (Ruskin-Brown et al. 2006, 143)

### 3. INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

There are several of definition about integrated marketing communication (IMC) depending on their complexity perception and emphasized terms. For example, as Kotler defined “*IMC is the concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organization and its products*”. (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 25)

Shortly, IMC can be defined as the management process of integrating all marketing communications activities such as media, contacts, promotion across relevant audience points to achieve greater brand coherence. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 26)

In this studies, following involved factors are described respectively: direct marketing communication, cross-cultural marketing communication, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling, sponsorship and advertising.

The fundamental advantage of IMC is “*synergy*” which is the characteristic to boost the whole promotion system as well as to keep it run smoothly. Every part of IMC such as advertising, promotion, media, personal selling activities are put together to aim the mutual goal – increasing sale profits, revenues and shares. Besides, there are obviously other benefits of IMC such as greater marketing precision, operational efficiency, cost savings, easier working relations, and greater agency accountability. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 27)

To achieve the integration and synergy of IMC, the terms of 4Es and 4Cs are like the criteria to evaluate IMC qualification.

The 4Es are:

- Enhancing – improvement, boost quality
- Economical – reasonable cost, using financial properly
- Efficient – focus on competences
- Effective – achieve the goals in the right way on the right time

The 4Cs are:

- Coherence – adherence and connected firm's operation
- Consistency – stability condition
- Continuity – keep the IMC system stable over time
- Complementary communications – supplemental and supportive communications

(Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 28 & 29)

In the 4Es, the classification between “*efficient*” and “*effective*” should not be confused, Pickton & Broderick (2005) said “*efficiency is about doing things right and effectiveness is about doing right things*”. Along with *economical* and *enhancing*, the 4Es are like the high standard of measurement for IMC, while “*coherence*”, “*consistency*”, “*continuity*” and “*complementary communications*” in the 4Cs are the vital elements to keep communication system smoothly and stably. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 28 & 29)

### **3.1 Direct marketing communications**

Direct marketing or direct marketing communication is a direct interactive method which concerns to advertising and promotion in order to improve the relationship between firms and customers. (Rowley 2006, 139)

There are some ways direct marketing communication involves such as personal selling activities like face-to-face selling, direct mail, direct response advertising on radio or other telemarketing methods. Today, with the

convenience of technology and software development, for example CRM software or ERPS tools, large organizations often have customer database records and their clients or customers receive incentive schemes or advertisement via that system. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 621)

Among the big range of media in direct marketing communication, direct mail is the most frequently used because its benefits of cost savings, fast information delivery. It is not strange to get dozens of commercial mails every morning when people check their inbox. For that reason, the direct advertising mail is considered as the “*junk mail*”, so that to be successful in this method, some target prospective factors needs to be concerned before sending mails. A list of potential customer or the most repeat buyers should be made, the mail should not be long and must focus on the main content which tends to inform customers, prices, special offer or new introduced products in mail must be bold and impressive consumers. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 627)

Another direct marketing media to connect customer is telemarketing such as telephone which is commonly used in USA. This method is effective, intimate and persuasive to customers for the quick response from them. However, not like the direct mail, using telephone to call numerous customers is expensive. In addition, the messages on phone must be straightforward and clearly to avoid the confusion of customers. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 628)

### **3.2 Cross-cultural marketing communications**

Globalization is expanding everywhere in the whole world today, so that marketing communications are affected by multicultural interaction. According to Hollensen, culture is defined as “*the accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organization or society*”. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 172). Depending on culture and origin, people have different lifestyle, awareness as well as trading attitude about products.

Hofstede, one of the pioneers in organizational culture and cross-cultural research classified 4 dimensions on cultures:

- *Power distance*: degree of equality, power, hierarchy.
- *Uncertainty avoidance*: degree of feeling threatened by uncertain, ambiguous, risky situation.
- *Individualism / collectivism*: degree of individualism versus group.
- *Competitiveness*: degree of competition among people versus caring for others.

(Fred van Raaij, 1996)

For example, risk adverse cultures such as Japan, Greece may be difficult to work out with risk taking cultures such as US or Hongkong.

When introducing or manufacturing a product in a target country, it is necessary to notice about the country origin image which is described as “*the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person holds of products of a specific country*”. Some categories is included in country origin image such as where originally product made in, traditional expression, product description or labeling. For example, Chinese manufacturers often produce and introduce their products with Western “feeling” brand (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 173 & 174), or all made-in-China products are underestimated about quality in South East Asia, although not all of them are bad.

### **3.3 Public Relations**

Public relations, widely known as PR is not a strange concept nowadays. In marketing communications, PR is responsible for the role “*publics*” which includes activities such as lobbying, relationship with employees, community, target group, sponsorship, and publicity. In general, PR and marketing have mutual fundamental perception, but with the development of modern business they have different functions and roles. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 547)

In the simplest way, Hunt and Grunig (1994) defined PR as “*the management of communication between an organization and its publics*” (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 549). Through this definition, PR can be divided into 2 categories: internal PR (within organizations) and external PR (external publics). While the internal PR defines the relationship between management, director and employees or stockholders with employees, the external PR concerns to deal with the relationship and communication between organization and “outside” people such as society, distributors, consumers. (Nayyar 2010, 55 & 66)

It is undeniable the benefits of PR to support marketing communication. PR provides the high credibility and high visibility with efficient cost. The credibility is boosted by PR which improves the trust, confidence, brand awareness and reputation in society view. Moreover, the investment on PR is low cost compared with other activities of promotion. However, with the saturated mass media, publicity is low control. For example, the copyright of releases, editorial coverage or editorial content is the problem; someone is even understood copyright is the right to copy. Besides, the accuracy of information and the time of appearance on media are not able to be controlled (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 567). Furthermore, to be shown up on globally reputation magazines such as Times, Forbes with high guarantee of PR effectiveness, the payment for those editors is very expensive and organization must have well-known reputation.

### **3.4 Sales promotion**

In many people’s perception, promotion and sales promotion are the same term, but in marketing communications sciences they are merged and promotion is broaden which includes PR, advertising, personal selling and sales promotion. Basically, the main function of sales promotion is to stimulate the purchases behavior of products or services. (Chunawalla 2008, 260)

The well-known definition about sales promotion was provided by Shimp (2000) that means “*the use of any incentive by a manufacturer or service provider to induce the trade (wholesalers or retailers) and/ or consumers to buy a brand and to encourage the sales force to aggressively sell it*”. There are several of activities in sales promotion as the incentive schemes which can be divided in financial incentive schemes such as discount or special offers and non-financial incentive schemes such as sampling, couponing, premiums, bonus, and contests. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 638-646)

There are 3 sales promotion objectives:

- “*Consumer sales promotions*” improve sales of existing products, focus on encouraging the repeat purchase, and boost the brand image and quality in consumers view.
- “*Trade sales promotions*” mainly concentrate in trading; distribution and competition combat of new introduced products.
- “*Employee sales promotions*” motivate all staff to improve customer communication and selling activities

(Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 641 & 642)

Sales promotions are highly flexible that can be used both reactively as the quick responses to competitor activities and proactively as the plan for integrating other marketing communication activities. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 640 & 641)

### **3.5 Personal selling**

Personal selling is defined as the person-to-person communication process between a salesman and customers that is aimed to satisfy the buyers demand and to bring benefits to the both parties (Rajput & Vasishth 2008, 91). After long period of marketing communication development, personal selling is not merely

“selling” activities, it is also about customer service, market analysis, sales forecast, and seller team coordinator. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 690)

In general, there are 4 steps to set up a personal selling strategy:

- “*Prospecting*” is initial sketching a big picture of selling plan, profound target market, traditional national, key accounts information which can be provided from consultants or specialists in the area.
- “*Qualifying*” is the next step to analyze customers’ characteristic after gathering information from the beginning.
- “*Presentation*” is about the salesperson’s presentation to customers. The plan for presentation is pre-planned based on financial project, decision-making process to achieve goal.
- “*Objection handling and closing*” is the final stage of implementing personal selling, similarly to national accounts, but in location decisions there is probably lower level of flexibility due to the legislation of different regions.

(Uлага & Sharma 2001)

Negotiation is a key in “*selling art*”, and negotiators are good artists if they persuade customers to buy their products successfully. Apart from convincing buyers, bargaining is a competitive skill in negotiation to obtain the best profit for salesperson and the reasonable prices for consumers. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 699)

### **3.6 Sponsorship**

Sponsorship is considered as an aspect and an activity of PR in integrated marketing communication that is aimed to achieve the benefits for sponsors. Apart from numerous of definitions, Berrett (1993) provided a concept about sponsorship as “*a contribution to an activity by a commercial organization in cash, or in kind, with the expectation of achieving corporate and marketing objectives*”. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 575)

For the big advantages of sponsorship in marketing communication, companies make huge investments on this promotion method. Effective sponsorship is able to boost brand's image and awareness, to provide sponsor a way to differentiate from competitors and achieve competitive advantage. Moreover, sponsorship offers both sponsors (an organization who give money to a sponsee for an opportunity to create a link with that sponsee in mind of consumers or potential consumers) and sponsees (an organization, an event or a team who receive the amount from sponsors to fulfill the sponsors objectives) media leverage or any kind of marketing leverage opportunities to promote PR campaign. It is not difficult to recognize the sponsorship's signal in movie industry; for example, in a film only one mobile phone brand is shown up, so that brand must be the sponsor for the movie production. Besides, sponsorship offers the exclusive form, for example sport celebrities such as David Beckham or Lionel Messi are high paid to be the exclusive icons for some brands. (Madill & O'Reilly 2009)

Sponsorship nowadays can create co-marketing alliances or it is called co-branding. For examples in 2002, the giant sport devices producer Nike made an agreement to be a sponsor of Manchester United who uses all Nike's products and makes brand promotion for Nike. The co-operation between such two well-known reputations in sport will boost the marketing effect dramatically. (Farrelly & Quester 2004)

### **3.7 Advertising**

Advertising is the most emerged promotion tool in integrated marketing communication, for a long time since the beginning step of media development; advertising is the "*most wanted*" method to improve the awareness of product's image in customers view. Kotler, the father of marketing defined advertising related to media as "*the paid non-personal communication from an identified*

*sponsor using mass media to persuade or influence an audience*". (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 594)

Although the cost of advertising is not cheap, its role in marketing campaign is vital for persuading people to buy, building brand, differentiating brands among competitors and increasing sales. Some success examples of global advertising can be listed such as Coca-cola, McDonald's, Nike, Apple who are always top spenders on advertising as well as top brand reputation and value in all over the world. Today, with the support from high-tech, internet, media and social network such as Facebook, Twitter, advertising is even more advantageous to reach majority of audiences. When thinking about advertisement, people may turn on the TV, but there are various types of advertising such as poster, banner ads on websites, direct response ads or "*call-to-action*" advertising, advertorials like press advertisements. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 599 & 607-610)

Unique selling point (USP) is a popular term in advertising that is aimed to develop the marketing strategy in single, clear and unique selling proposition. However, for the harsh competition nowadays, new trends and products models are often copied quickly in markets, so the concept of "*silence*" was born to give recognition of relevant brands to consumers. To get high revenue of sale, advertising needs to be effective in giving awareness, to classify brands and impress audiences, *salience* term creates the differences among numerous of similar products. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 603)

Advertising is clearly aimed to draw attention of audiences and to emphasize on generating awareness of customer as described; nowadays it is linked closely to mass media. For this reason, the next section of this study is specifying relationship of media and marketing.

#### 4. MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

Marketing communications media is defined as “*anything that is capable of carrying or transmitting a marketing communications messages to one or more people*”. All methods of mass media are conducted in marketing communications media such as internet, press publication, TV, radio, mail, posters and other related to media ambient (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 104). In this section, following parts are represented: social media marketing, e-media and social media channels.

With massively development of telecommunication and media nowadays, the role of media in marketing communication is remarkably. Representing as the carrier of messages to connect target audiences, mass media keeps flowing and updating information from the sender to the receiver. Selecting right media methods is vital to obtain marketing success; it depends on strategy, budget or range of customers to choose kinds of media methods. For example, for running small size business with a little customer, low cost media should be chosen such as poster, direct mail, brochures or online advertising. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 106)

Commercial or advertising is the most popular promotional tool which is used on media traditionally included press, TV, outdoor posters, cinema. Today, commercial video releases are frequently used in marketing campaign, for example football star David Beckham and fashion brand H&M co-operate to establish a commercial video about H&M men’s underwear. Besides, Internet is the potential source of marketing media for its low cost, no geographical boundaries and ability to reach large target audiences. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 108)

The new generation of media today is plentiful, especially online media included explosion of social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, Google plus, etc. Thank to develop of World Wide Web with the Web 2.0 era to run those social network sites, people are connected much more easily than before, so that the transmission of information and marketing communication are more advantageous. Nowadays, most of companies have social network sites to promote their brand's images, to update news as well as to communicate with their clients with extremely low cost but high effect of media. (Winer 2009)

#### **4.1 Social media marketing**

Social media is a broaden concept in marketing promotion nowadays, so what is social media? There are numerous of definition about social media from Wikipedia, Oxford dictionary to Encyclopedia. In 2008, Wikipedia defined social media as *"participatory online media where news, photos, videos and podcasts are made public via social media websites through submission. Normally accompanied with a voting process to make media items become "popular"*. Gradually, with the development of mass media, social media involves in more range of communication forms such as blogs, Internet forums or applications like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube. (Evans 2008, 33)

Social media came to marketing like *"friends with benefits"*. In marketer's perspective, utilizing social media to boost marketing promotion is the best way to reach audiences. The public range of social media is shining for social networking era; most of youngsters have their own social network accounts on Facebook, Twitter, My Space, Youtube or Google. By fast sharing information, social media is the valuable weapon in any marketing campaign. Moreover, audiences are able to leave their comments, rating, and reviews about information sharing on web. However, everything has two sides, because of large amount of quick sharing information, it is hard to control and certify the

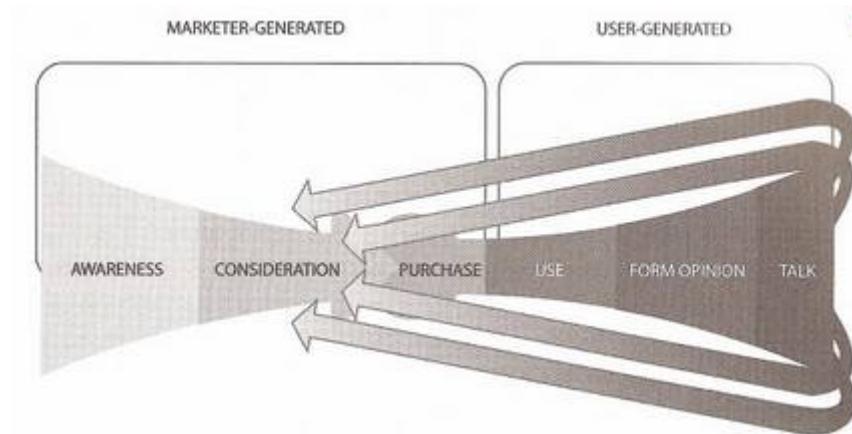
sharing information sources. Sometimes, fake brands or fake information can even make audiences doubt about genuine products. (Evans et al. 2008, 37)

The fundamental function of social media in marketing is to create awareness in consumers view. Three steps to make sale from social benefits are defined as awareness → consideration → purchase. (Evans et al. 2008, 39)



*Figure 3. The Classic Purchase Funnel  
(Evans et al. 2008, 39)*

To adapt in marketing communication, social feedback cycle is built as the connection between marketers and users. After experienced products, feedbacks are returned to marketers via social media communication systems. (Evans et al. 2008, 41-43)



*Figure 4. The social Feedback Cycle  
(Evans et al. 2008, 42)*

The above figure is an expansion of the classic purchase funnel, user-generated is the “post-purchase” activity. The impacts of user-generated is based on their opinions and reviews, they may share their own experience online by different mass media methods. Social media established awareness and it also bring back consumer’s opinion to re-consideration, so that the information is kept flowing in two ways of communication between marketers and audiences.

## **4.2 E-media**

Electronic media (E-media) is the special version of media which is associated with technology, digital, TV, Internet, World Wide Web (WWW), CD-ROM/DVD and others related to multimedia. The birth of e-media is the revolution step of mass media in reaching audiences for its convenience. E-media offers multi-interactivity among social networks, short and direct response times in communication, plenty of information, no geographic boundaries and low costs of investment but high effects. It is undeniable the benefits online e-media, especially Internet brings to marketing communications. Searching, browsing, representing information, commercial videos, e-mail communication, and online

marketing research are the most frequency e-media functions used to serve different purposes of marketing communication. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 127-128)

Electronic multimedia is divided into 2 forms: online and offline applications. Online e-media is accessed at “real time” which is connected via Internet. This kind of e-media is flexible time; information is always available for users by uploaded files on forum or sites. Another type of online e-media is interactive TV which is live broadcasted, the TV screen contains videotext that provided audiences information and view. Offline e-media refers to transmitting messages or videos via offline memory hardware; CD-ROM/DVD is the most popular form of offline e-media which provide video images, audio tracks in large amount of information capacity to audiences. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 132)

An important invention to make media develop is the Internet as well as the World Wide Web. The Internet is like a global house of information which connects computer networks everywhere across the world. It is smart to utilize the Internet to improve promotion in marketing communication for large amount of Internet users in all over the world. Browser software was born to run the World Wide Web which represents web links, mixture of hypertext, graphics, photographs, icons and multimedia. Nowadays, there is several of free browser software such as Internet Explorer, Opera, Google Chrome, and Firefox with advance functions of fast Internet surfing, multi-tab, pop-up or ad block. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 133)

However, apart from valuable advantages of the online world, some potential obstacles still exist. For huge amount of information sources on the WWW, the searching process of audiences may consume long time to get good references, sometimes rumors or similar information could confuse people. Due to the large quantity of Internet users, the target audiences may be poor and difficult to orient. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 141-142)

### **4.3 Social media channels**

In the golden era of high-tech nowadays, social media comprises the large range of channels which can be referred to internet services, mobile applications, TV, radio and other multimedia. In this section, the content mainly focuses on the online social media channels, especially blogs and kinds of social networking.

Online social media channels provide “*connecting people*”; this term could be among individual interaction, business organization communication or in bigger population like international society connection. Currently, some emerged social networking applications can be listed such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, Google plus, videos or, host or sharing documents such as YouTube, Google documents, Dropbox, Flickr. (Thomler 2012)

Online social media is the favorite used tool in marketing communication for its convenience of usage, cost saving, reaching audiences without any boundaries, simple set up. (Thomler et al. 2012)

A blog is a platform which contains individual articles, comments, links or other individual posts. The publications on blog are represented mostly for every readers and available comments depending on the settings of posters or blog’s administrators. The purpose of blog may be understood in different people, someone reads blogs for news, and others use blogs for marketing promotion,



The initial big picture of social media was built by French web business consultant Fred Cavazza, it is called "Social Media Landscape". The figure is the combination of every facet of social media, including popular applications like social networks, share, publish to less reputation social media categories such as MMO, micro blog, life stream. After 5 years from 2008, Facebook and Google now is increasing their roles in social media channels, they are also the biggest enemies of each other in social media market's competition. Besides, thank to the development of social media channels, people have more choices to participate in the social media world, so that marketers also have more options to reach their audiences. ([www.fredcavazza.net](http://www.fredcavazza.net))

## **5. INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING**

A plan for integrated marketing communications (IMC) is aimed to manage activities related to anticipated problems, forecast demand and build up strategy for implementation. In this section, following steps involved in the plan are described respectively: research and analysis for decision-making, identifying potential markets and target audiences, setting objectives and determining strategy, media implementation, evaluation and control. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 291)

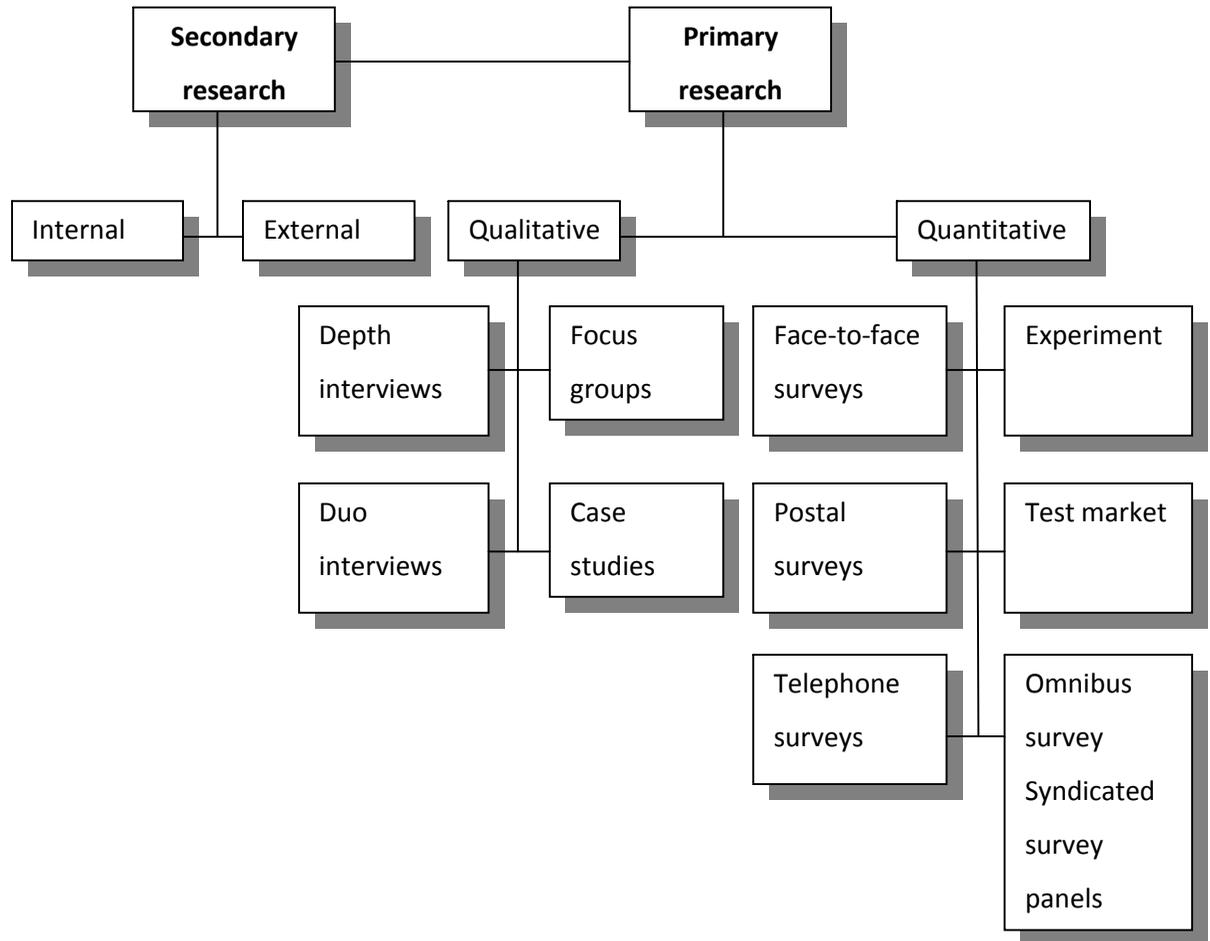
Like every plan, IMC planning starts with the big scope of all activity and the initial step is doing research and analysis results. This step provides marketers information, situation of markets, and audiences before setting objectives and specific strategy for the plan. The final step is evaluation and control which observe and judge the consequence. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 291-292)

There are numerous of plan format, but in general the development of plan process is a cycle. All starts at the overlook such as research and analysis then ends with the evaluation to obtain experience for the next future plans. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 293)

### **5.1 Research and analysis for decision-making**

The main purpose of doing research in IMC is gathering then analyzing information before giving the right decision in a market. Market research provides accurate numbers about market, environment situation for decisions-makers, then that leads to evaluation of advantages and disadvantages. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 353)

Bennett (1988) defined market research as “*the function which links that consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information that used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems*”. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 354)



*Figure 6. Categorizing market research data  
(Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 358)*

The above map shows all modern types of market research which is classified in two main categories: secondary research versus primary research. In this study, qualitative research and quantitative research are more concentrate explained.

Secondary research is a kind of gathering information from existing, published sources; secondary data can be purchased from existing investigating reports or specialist companies. Primary research comprises two sub-categories: qualitative and quantitative research that always finds out information data at the first hand, doing research problems in hand for a specific purpose and client. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 358)

In qualitative research, there are 4 main of methods which are depth interviews, duos interviews, focus groups and case studies. The kinds of interviews are normally face-to-face interviews or interviews with a pair, while focus group is a group discussion, information contribution. Case studies are the most complicated method in qualitative research for requirement of investigation of situation and relevant problems, then report information with specific numbers and references. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 359)

Quantitative research is used to analyze current situation which include kinds of survey such as face-to-face surveys, telephone surveys, postal surveys, syndicated surveys, continuous research, experiment and test market. Among those mentioned quantitative methods, types of surveys are more frequency used for its quick respond and direct information. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 360)

After completing those kinds of research, the next step is collecting data information and sampling methods are used to do this job in 2 ways: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling analyzes all elements of given population with an equal chance of being selected, while non-probability is the opposite meaning. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 360)

## 5.2 Identifying potential markets

Before defining a potential market and the target audiences precisely, some involved factors are classified based on different segments. McDonald & Dunbar (1995) defined market segmentation as “*a process of splitting customers into different groups, or segments, within which customers with similar characteristics have similar needs*”. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 373)

Types of the segmentation are variables, for example, some key segmentations marketers concern such as demographics, geographic, geodemographic, psychographics and behavioral. In this section, demographics, psychographics and behavioral segments are mainly focused.

Demographics are the first segmentation marketers think of before they define a market and target audiences. In English, demographic is a science which basically researches about human age, gender, nationality, religion, ethnic, occupation, income and education, and those combined elements can shape characteristics of people. Understanding original characteristics of consumers, marketers are able to reach them easily. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 375)

Socio-economic is a sub-segmentation in demographics that analyze education, income and occupation factors together, so that it is clear to classify high-income, low-income, middle class or workers in a society. Moreover, life stage is also a sub-category which profound the marital status, family size, life-cycle to help marketers cope with their concerns. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 375-376)

Pickton & Broderick (2005) said “*while demographics identify who is purchasing a particular product or service and associated details about where and how they live, psychographics look at why they buy*”. Psychographic segmentation

classifies psychological dimensions such as values, attitudes, values, interest, opinions and lifestyle of consumers. In 1977, a survey from American Marketing Association found that 37.9% of enterprises applied psychographic methods in market research. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 379)

Nowadays, more developed terms are built to measure people's psychology; the most popular one is VALS framework which classify consumers into 3 primary motivations: ideals, achievement and self-expression. Those mainly motivated by ideals are guided by knowledge and principles. Others who are incentive by achievement love to buy products or services that are able to show their success tangibly. The self-expression group loves desire social, physical activity, variety and risk. (Kotler & Keller 2012, 248)

Behavioral segmentation divides consumers into groups based on their knowledge, attitude, benefits, and purchase behavior. People have different views in products, needs and wants, so this segmentation is built to realize the hidden behavior of customers based on their purchase frequency, hobbies, loyalty status. (Kotler & Keller et al. 2012, 249)

### **5.3 Setting objectives and determining strategy**

The role of setting objectives is enlightening marketer's minds "where they want to go", clear objectives or goals provide clear direction to determine strategy.

Every plan needs specific objectives, so does IMC; when marketers realize where they are, communication objectives can be set up at any level of the hierarchy of effects model of Rossiter and Larry Percy that was built basically on following 4 steps:

1. *"Category need"* – Establishing products or services as necessary to remove or satisfy a perceived discrepancy between the current motivational state and the desired motivational state.

2. *“Brand awareness”* – Buyer’s recognition ability to the brand within the category in sufficient detail to make a purchase.
  3. *“Brand attitude”* – Consumer’s evaluation of the brand based on the previous experiences and perceived ability to meet requirements.
  4. *“Brand purchase intention”* – A self-instruction of customer to make purchase or take purchase related action.
- (Kotler & Keller et al. 2012, 504-505)

Depending on different kinds of strategy, hierarchy of effects might have variable forms, for examples, Colley’s hierarchy of objectives (1961) was designed on 4 stages: awareness → comprehension → conviction → action. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 422)

Mintzberg (1995) coined five strategies Ps as the most popular strategy process that frequently applied by many organizations. Each of those Ps implies for a strategy direction of IMC in terms of:

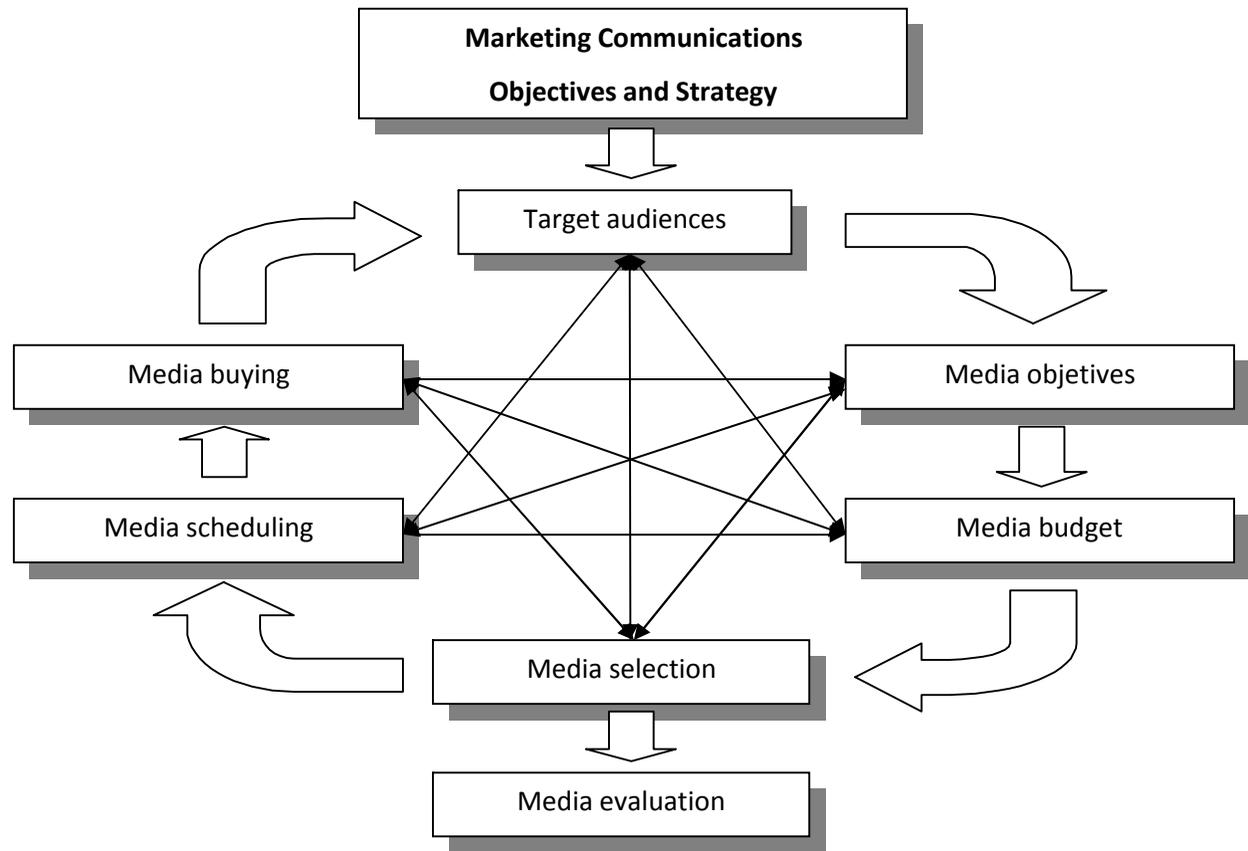
- *“Strategy as Plan”* – Strategies are coherent, comprehensive and integrated into a framework designed to meet objectives.
  - *“Strategy as Ploy”* – This type of strategy is adaptable for short-lived or integrated into the organization’s long-term plan, depending on different situations or specific competitive periods.
  - *“Strategy as Pattern”* – The strategy is not planned, but developed as a “consistency in behavior”.
  - *“Strategy as Position”* – It is about the positioning of organization or its products in a market and surrounding environment.
  - *“Strategy as Perspective”* – Focusing on internal perspective, it is about the viewpoint held and behavior enacted by an organization’s employees and other stakeholders, including internal audiences.
- (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 426)

While strategy as pattern is the less integrated method, strategy as position needs combined several of marketing communication responses depending chosen position in a target market. Strategy as Plan requires strictly analysis, consistent planning for long-term plan, oppositely, strategy as ploy is flexible, variable, and always ready to change for marketing competitive adaption. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 426)

#### **5.4 Media implementation**

It is undeniable the vital role of media in IMC for various media methods and the large number of media users or consumers globally, however, due to “*saturated*” and giant capacity of information, a media implementation strategy needs to be planned systematically.

Pickton & Broderick (2005) represented the media implementation cycle which includes coherent activities in a process from media strategy planning, scheduling, target audiences, media selection to media evaluation. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 465)



*Figure 7. The media implementation cycle  
(Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 466)*

- “*Marketing communications objectives and strategy*” – the initial step, the overall determined goals and intended achievements are made before planning the media implementation
- “*Target audiences*” – a target group of people the media marketing communication intends to reach.
- “*Media objectives*” – depending on the based-plan of marketing communications objectives and strategy as well as target audiences selection, the role of media will be played on issues of reach, frequency, impact and cost constraints imposed by the media budget.
- “*Media budget*” – sources of funds provide the use of mass media that are one piece of the whole marketing communications budget.

- “*Media selection*” – media methods chosen to allocate the media implementation.
- “*Media scheduling*” – the process of planning times and frequency for advertising or other promotion methods on media.
- “*Media buying*” – the process of achieving the best deals for selected and scheduled media.
- “*Media evaluation*” – assessment of the media implementation performance.

(Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 465-466)

In most of the stages of the media implementation cycle, especially media objectives, media planners need to concern about reach, frequency and impact. Those elements are coherent and interaction to ensure the high standard of performance in the whole process. While “reach” refers to the ability of getting in touch to numbers of target audiences, “frequency” is the average number of times of providing messages, awareness to audiences; “impact” is about the effectiveness, quality of media selection to rate whether the media implementation is powerful. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 471-474)

## **5.5 Evaluation and control**

The core purpose of IMC evaluation is to achieve better integrated performance in all stages of the marketing communications process. Several key benefits are acquired from the evaluation such as improved decision-making, risk reduction, improved campaign, cost savings, accumulated wisdom. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 515)

The evaluation of every step in IMC plan is based basically on 3 criteria: efficiency, effectiveness and economy, so it ensures that the whole process keeps running smoothly, effectively with a reasonable budget. As Pickton and Broderick defined:

- “*Efficiency*” means *doing things right*
- “*Effectiveness*” means *doing the right things*
- “*Economy*” means *doing things within a specified budget*.

Besides, there is another option to evaluate a IMC campaign in a deeper way that based on three broad categories which support each other: media measurement, message content (or communications effect) and sales effect. Media measurement is a common model for marketing communications research which conducts effectiveness of different media tools for the message content, normally used in pre-testing and post-testing steps of IMC evaluation process. Message content (or communications effect) and sales effect have a link together that the message research provides frequency and creativity of communications, sales effect evaluation also reports about marketing communications environment via promotion activities. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 517-519)

Looking at the marketing communications methods of RelationshipGames which is represented in the next chapter in this study, the three “E” criteria (Efficiency, Effectiveness, Economy) may fit the best in the evaluation options. Economy is the priority concern of RelationshipGames for their very limited budget. To balance the triple criteria, the case company utilized free-cost social networking which are the popular places for young generation communications to promote their product with adequate effectiveness achievement. The other assessment option is about media communication measurement and sales effect, but the case is planning for marketing communications strategy only.

Moreover, the evaluation process might be implemented before, during and after a campaign. “*Pre-testing*” is an evaluation of IMC elements before a campaign starts. This is the initial period of evaluation to analyze conveyed survey information from market research process, to minimize the potential risk, uncertainties and negative consequence before the campaign begins officially. “*Post-testing*” is like the review at the end or after a campaign, this period is normally less priority than “pre-testing” because investment has been spent, the campaign launched. The main intend of “post-testing” is to overview the outcome, to accumulate experience, lessons, feedback, impacts, recommendation and expectations for next campaigns in the future. (Pickton & Broderick et al. 2005, 520-525)

Apart from evaluation, IMC control is a also term which assess the effectiveness of the involved activities and make necessary changes and adjustments. There are 4 key types of control in firms: annual-plan control, profitability control, efficiency control and strategic control.

- “*Annual-plan control*” – to examine whether the goals, plans results, sale effects or profit margins are achieved within a year.
- “*Profitability control*” – focusing on profits, revenues or deficits, financial crisis examination.
- “*Efficiency control*” – being similar to profitability, but evaluate to improve the spending efficiency, impact of marketing expenditures such as advertising, sales promotion.
- “*Strategic control*” – managing plan to seize opportunities to markets, products and distribution channels.

(Kotler & Keller et al. 2012, 663-665)

Depending on specified mission, vision and priority goals, companies may have different or mixture kinds of control to fit their purposes. For example, DuPont or Johnson & Johnson have problems on complicated financial analysis and marketing expenditures, so they emphasize on improving marketing efficiency. (Kotler & Keller et al. 2012, 663-665)

## **6. CASE RELATIONSHIPGAMES – MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN**

The plan is built 40% based on the theory plan which represented in the section 5; the rest is designed in practical way to adapt to current company's situation and its future strategy. For this reason, the plan's structure may look different with the theory part and some steps such as research and analysis on potential markets and audiences, setting objectives and determining strategy are skipped because they are already decided.

### **6.1 The company's background**

RelationshipGames Ltd is a company founded in 2010 by the current CEO Mari Parviainen, which develops and produces Relationship Games. Relationship Games is developed in co-operation with East Interactive Oy, Finland. (RelationshipGames Ltd 2010)

RelationshipGames is the world's first social reality game for couples in Facebook. RelationshipGames brings extra spice and sparkle into relationship and brings couples closer together through fun real life game play. Relationship Games uses internet and mobile technologies to strengthen the bond between spouses by encouraging them to interact more with each other. (RelationshipGames Ltd 2010)

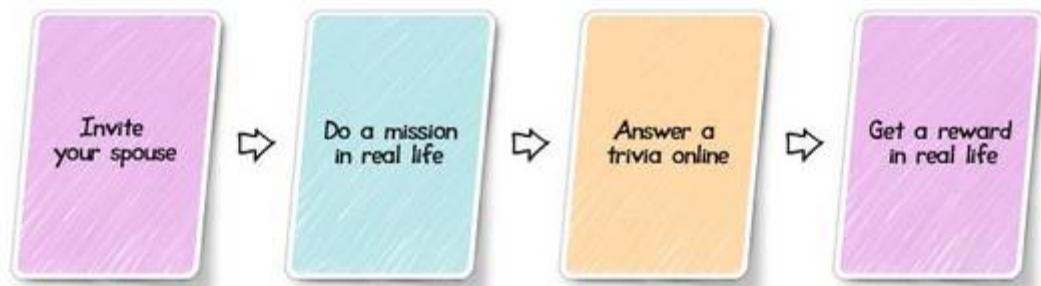
In other word, Mari described her business in one sentence that "RelationshipGames will revolutionize the way couples interact and rekindle the passion in their everyday lives with the help of interactive and adaptive web and mobile solutions".

Apart from Facebook , Relationship Games established the company’s image on other social networks such as Twitter and Pinterest. Twitter helps the company to expand the media communication of RelationshipGames in UK due to it develops in the social networking market here. Pinterest strategy is still planning then will be developed in long-term, so it is less active than the other media methods.

The company is so far self-funded and receives some public fund from the Finnish government, CEO Mari Parviainen keeps seeking funding in order to boost product development, IT staff, marketing and advertising. Moreover, the company is looking for international media partners or marketing alliances such as magazines, media or telecommunication enterprises that are interested in their own branded versions of game, then publishing articles about RelationshipGames.

## 6.2 The company’s products introduction

The main product of the company is a game application on Facebook that related to “real relationship”. The game application can be ran on Facebook or directly from the official site of the company. Although the game is virtual, actions and missions in the game are completed in real life to boost relationship emotion of couples.



*Image 1. General game’s steps (RelationshipGames Ltd 2010)*

The initial step a player has to do is inviting his/her spouse in game, then love-boosting missions for couples will be given such as making favorite breakfast to each other, texting sweet messages, surprising gifts given, more sensitive, harder even more awkward missions will challenge players when they reach high levels. After finishing each missions and they are checked by spouses, points will be rewarded accumulatively to reach higher levels. The next stage is like a survey which comprises questions to examine compatibility, feeling of couples after completing given missions. The last door is the result, achievement of relationship in real life after playing game together for a while, do a mission in real life, so get a reward in real life.

The fan page of RelationshipGames on Facebook reached over 1000 like, topics about relationship, love events or news are updated here. Besides, RelationshipGames established an online blog which gives relationship tips in real life, ideas for couples in love or family events such as Valentine's day, mother's day or father's day. The blog also generates ideas about love to helps players who stuck in missions to pass. Articles in the blog are established weekly and before relationship events to give references to readers.

### **6.3 The company's target markets and audiences**

As the CEO Mari revealed, English-speaking audiences are the main target group for RelationshipGames, currently, UK and Finland are the two markets which are focused, UK is the biggest market. Besides, the company has launched Finnish localization with one of the biggest online well-being media sites in Finland such as [www.helsinki.fi](http://www.helsinki.fi), [www.huoltamo.com](http://www.huoltamo.com) that also deals with relationship issues.

Currently, the company has about 2000 18-65 years old players globally; the average female player is 34 years old, while average male player is 37 years old. Specifically, according to Mari, the main target clients of

RelationshipGames are 25-44 years old couples on Facebook and Twitter. Missions of the game as well as company's blogs or other media communication methods are to refresh relationship and give love ideas to couples in real life, so that it is the most appropriate to target within this age group. Relationship has no distance in languages, religions or geographic, so that the game and company's activities are designed in international way; game contents, blog's posts, press releases are all in English. For this reason, English-speaking users, especially English native speaking region such as UK is more concentrate.

According to YouGov's media consulting, at the moment, Facebook is still the leader of social networking in UK with 65% of online users have Facebook accounts, following by YouTube (50%), while the number in Twitter is 23%. It is predicted that the social media use in UK is still increasing in the future for its advantages for users such as the quick interaction, communication, connecting friends. Utilizing this reason, developing media communication on social networking is the best selection. Besides, the investment for promotion as well as client's communication on social networking is much more cheaper than other media methods such as telephone, advertising on TV. ([www.yougov.co.uk](http://www.yougov.co.uk))

#### **6.4 The company's SWOT analysis**

The SWOT analysis is prepared based on the result of the CEO Mari's interview and on own view of current company's situation. The aim of SWOT analysis is to provide a transparent look at four aspects of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in order to planning better strategy in marketing communication plan for RelationshipGames.

### 6.4.1 Strengths

Being a young-history company in a new field of business, RelationshipGames have many challenges at the beginning period of establishment. However, the company has its own advantages which can compete with others. On the publication, RelationshipGames is described as the world's first social reality game for couples on Facebook. This is the new type in game industry; most of activities are done in real life, not in virtual way like other traditional games. RelationshipGames is considered as the leader, the pioneer in this kind of game to improve relationship status of couples.

Moreover, the game product is designed in the easiest way for users to get familiar with the game, even for middle-age or elder players. With a pair of created accounts on Facebook, a couple can run the game application together anywhere with the Internet connection. Missions, stages in the game are shown clearly and all in English, so that people from across the world can play the game.

Currently, RelationshipGames may be called as a "*monopoly*" in the social reality game with more than 2000 players in all over the world in range of age 18-65 years old. Besides, the game application is built based on Facebook, so that the game accounts or privacy settings are safe and confidential at the highest level as the guarantee of Facebook.

Furthermore, after more than 3 years of development, the company has a group of loyalty players who achieved the better relationships or found new loves via the game.

Another strong point of RelationshipGames is its good media communication. Social networking and blog are the best choices to reach audiences for this low-budget company but high effect. Its blog and Facebook fan page are not

only for client's communication, they also publishes relationship tips or advices as well as great ideas for activities in international events about relationship such as Valentine's day, mother's day or father's day.

#### **6.4.2 Weaknesses**

RelationshipGames is still developing their new business, so it is undeniable to admit that there are still some drawbacks. At this moment, although the game is welcomed by numerous couples's players, the themes, the game features, the design styles as well as range of missions are still simple. The players are probably interested in the first time to play because this is new kind of game which combines reality and virtuality, but after playing for a period, they might get bored due to repeated challenges in the game. For this reason, the company is building more features, seasonal missions and more innovation in the game contents.

The game has its own technical problems. Some errors or crashes occur during the game process; these issues disturb players, especially when they almost finish missions, or when collecting point or when answering mission's questions. The game is build based on Web 2.0 which can be ran on different browsers such as Google Chrome, Firefox, Internet Explorer, so that sometimes crashes or "not responding" problems happen on theses browsers, the game is affected.

Another weak point of RelationshipGames is its low budget. In fact, the company is self-fund and CEO Mari is looking more sponsors from Finnish government as well as other media communication companies for co-operation. Moreover, the company needs skillful IT staffs for game development, but this kind of labor requires high level of wages, so the company may face difficulty in negotiating about salary with IT applicants.

In general, the game product is still strange among plenty of other giant game producers in game industry. Audiences may doubt about the game's attraction, some even underestimates the game's future because they compare with other traditional games for entertainment from well-known Japanese organizations such as Konami, Sony entertainment.

### **6.4.3 Opportunities**

RelationshipGames established online game application on Facebook and its own blogs about relationship tips, so that market of the company has no boundaries in geography aspect. Currently, Facebook has about 1 billion account users globally, and this is the big advantage of RelationshipGames to boost the number of audiences as well as players for the game application.

The game innovation is also a opportunity for the company. At this moment, the game is still simple; investment on product development is a big step to impress current players as well as to attract new audiences.

Nowadays, in the busy life, couples may have conflicts or do not have much time together, so relationship troubles are the real problems. According to the research of new well-being statistic from the UK government, relationships satisfaction of local people was decreased from 2007-2010 and it does not have a sign to increase in future (<http://sd.defra.gov.uk/2010/07/wellbeing-statistics/>). This is the real problem in the focused market of RelationshipGames as well as the good opportunity to solve the real relationship troubles by the social reality game.

#### 6.4.4 Threats

As CEO Mari revealed, the first threat for RelationshipGames is that the company's product is not sticky enough. In fact, a social reality game online is not truly a clear product, it is intangible and confuses audiences who are not interested in or do not get familiar with social networking.

Another threat is a challenge with Facebook regulations. Facebook has restricted amount of fans see posts on RelationshipGames fan page, because Facebook wants companies to promote quality posts, not spamming.

RelationshipGames is competing with other social games and media such as Facebook social games, mobile devices game application about relationship and other blogs with the same topic. Currently, RelationshipGames has some competitors which provide computer and mobile reality games about love such as Kahnoodle, Duet, Tokii, Icebreak, The Love Language Challenge, all of those game applications are available on Appstore that are be able to run on smart phone easily anywhere with Internet or 3G connection. These competitors are threatening RelationshipGames due to stylish design of application, interesting features, ability to launch on smart phone devices.

Because of relying on Facebook, so some Facebook's threats may influence RelationshipGames. Virus started to attack Facebook, so the game application may be affected from this trouble which cause harms to game users. Besides, fake fan page sites bring bad reputation to the company anytime, because every account on Facebook is free to create their own pages, even exactly page's name with an existing page.

## **6.5 PR and media implementation strategy**

The aim of this section is to plan and create ideas for PR & media implementation strategy of RelationshipGames in the near future. The plans for PR & media methods of Facebook, Twitter, Blog & Press releases and Photo contest are represented respectively.

### **6.5.1 Facebook**

Facebook is the pioneer which opened the golden era of social networking in this century. Thank to Facebook, social media, marketing promotion and PR are more advantageous for ease of reaching wide audiences via this social network site. RelationshipGames is also the one which inherits benefits from Facebook in PR and media interaction with audiences. Currently, Facebook is the most important tool of media communication and based social game application of RelationshipGames, so that the company intends to build a media implementation plan on Facebook in the near future for PR promotion purpose.

On the Earth Hour 2013, RelationshipGames organized an online event on Facebook that is called “Candlelight Dinner on the Earth Hour 2013”. The event is an occasion to create romantic atmosphere with candlelight while having dinner of couples instead of using normal light to save the Earth for one hour. The event was spread to 700 people across the world, then after the event, those people may share their own experiences, ideas and tips of how they spent the one hour in romantic candlelight ambient with their lovers.



*Image 2. RelationshipGames's profile on Facebook*

Presence of company's facebook page is the first impression to audiences, so that it needs to be improved attraction. On Facebook, the cover picture impress audiences first, it let people knows what business field companies work in, while the profile picture is like a "label" of company's image. In the view of RelationshipGames page on Facebook, it expresses all about what the company wants to share, a "reality game for couples" sentence, animated couples on cover picture, heart shape in the profile picture.

The "About" section of the page is necessary to describe more details. For example, the history of the company, how it was established, address of the company, overview of the company, company's mission and vision. RelationshipGames fanpage should create a channel category where to add its own links to other social networking such as Twitter, blog, YouTube.

At this moment, RelationshipGames fan page reached 1014 likes and CEO Mari wants to increase this number continuously. The content posts on the company's page on Facebook are still simple and lack of attraction. More photography should be posted to provide clear vision to the fans. The posted photos should be divided into separate albums which represent separate topics. For example, asking the players or fans to share their photos about relationship, their own pictures caught in love moments, or photos on their Valentine's Day or wedding anniversary, then interaction, activities on the page such as "like", "share" or "subscribe" are increased.

Passionate, touching, interesting stories about relationship are good examples to inspire people. For instance, a story about Nick Vujicic, a Serbian-Australian motivational speaker who is armless and legless, but has strong willingness, struggled with his disability to live a meaningful life. This guy is well-known for giving speeches worldwide about his life stories and how to come over challenges in his life. Sharing videos of his speeches, or connecting his Facebook fan page is a good way to improve excellent content on RelationshipGames fan page. It is even more attractive if CEO Mari records a video about herself love stories then sharing on the company's Facebook site.

Moreover, real events must be organized, not just online events as the company created before. A real event for relationship occasions; for example, inviting fans to the event, setting up specified place, date, publishing contents, activities of the event. RelationshipGames has done enough online activities, now is the time to step out to real life, it might requires more investment, but more positive effects are gained, tighter relationship with clients, fans, customers. Organizing funny games about relationship in the event then offering visitors rewards or souvenirs after the event is able to impress audiences.

Another way to promote Facebook fan page is creating marketing alliance on Facebook. Achieving more “like” by connecting, sharing other pages, exchanging “like” with different pages, promoting each other on Facebook is the fastest way to reach more audiences. Besides, newsfeed about the company, relationship posts, links to the blog must be posted regularly and consistently to keep the high views of fans and followers. A staff or someone nominated must be responsible for the Facebook fan page of RelationshipGames to keep flowing interaction of those activities between the company and audiences.

### **6.5.2 Twitter**

Founded in 2006 by Jack Dorsey, after 7 years, Twitter now achieved more than 500 million registered users. Twitter is the main media tool of RelationshipGames to reach audiences in UK for high number of users of this social networking in this market. Currently, Twitter blog of RelationshipGames has more than 100 followers, Twitter is considered as a less important media communication method than Facebook of RelationshipGames (1000 likes), because the game application is not available and low quantity of RelationshipGames fans on Twitter.

Twitter is not only a social networking, it is also a micro-blogging service which is able to utilize for combination with RelationshipGames blog. A tweet text on Twitter is maximum 140 characters that is called “tweet”, the same contents, topics of articles or new releases on RelationshipGames blog should be summarized then publish on Twitter regularly to attract fans. A Tweet blog is the social media presence of the company, to increase the intensity of audiences reach, tweets should be posted regularly, about two or three times per day at least to the company’s followers.

Moreover, Twitter and Facebook supports each other efficiently, provide links of the company’s Facebook fan page and blog on Twitter, promote it by tweets

frequently, for example: “We reached 1000 likes on Facebook today, want to see how it is interesting? Click the Facebook link above”. In this way, more target audiences are able to reach by the connection of the two social networking. Like Facebook, creating co-marketing alliances is the advantageous way to get more audiences, establish relationship with other brands, especially well-known bloggers, tweeting and being interested in their blog, they might respond us as promotion to their followers.

As a real-time social networking, direct information and feedbacks are collected quickly by fast respond from target audiences. An upcoming event might be consulted via real-time interaction by followers, tweet a poll, generating ideas, opinions from audiences for a successful event before organizing it. A poll tweet are able to created via web-based tool Twtpoll of Twitter (twtpoll.com) not only for an event, a poll is like a direct survey for fans to suggest brilliant ideas for RelationshipGames products.



*Image 3. RelationshipGames's profile on Twitter*

Encouraging repeat audiences to become a promotion channel brings benefits to RelationshipGames. Followers are loyalty audiences, so it is advantageous

to ask them of sharing tweets about RelationshipGames on their blogs from the company's channel. Keep retweeting and tracking when someone gives a tweet on the company's channel to increase coherent interaction and traffic density of audience visits. Besides, posting valuable contents with sharing photos, interesting links about relationship or games everyday to keep attraction of audiences.

### **6.5.3 Blog**

Apart from the micro-blog Twitter, RelationshipGames has been developing their own blog which aims to provide tips about relationship issues in real life as a media promotion method. Normally, bloggers often choose a blog host to build their own blogs such as Google blog (blogger.com), Wordpress (wordpress.com), but RelationshipGames established its own blog which is linked to the company's official site. The company did a good job of frequently updating articles on the blog, preparing valuable contents for the posts and establishing seasonal blog's posts based on international relationship events such as Mother's day, Valentine's day.

Currently, the contents of RelationshipGames blog are only about relationship issues, to reach more audiences for promoting the blog, different kind of topics must be published. For examples, topics about games news, game releases introduction should be covered and posted regularly. Besides, interesting videos, pictures or quotation should be attached on posted articles sometimes, because vision provides insightful view and "*gravity*" to readers.



*Image 4. RelationshipGames blog*

Number of page views or articles visits is recommended to set up via software such as Web statistic tool StatCounter for tracking visitors. When the blog achieves numerous of readers, it is always beneficial to ask those audiences about donations or sponsorship. If they love the blog, no matter how much of contribution, they would support the blog for long-term. The donated funds should be announced in publication with clear purpose; for instance, charity contribution or funds for survivors of natural disasters. This is very good way to build PR on blog and to improve reputation of RelationshipGames in readers' views.

Like social networking like Facebook and Twitter, co-operation is highly important in PR and media communication strategy nowadays. Promoting other blogs, supporting other brands on RelationshipGames blog is the way to promote itself for exchanging promotion with partners. Do not forget to provide links of Facebook & Twitter and promote them on the blog, those three of

media communication tools must be merged all the time like a media promotion triangle.

At this moment, vlog – video blog is the new trend of blog which is welcomed warmly by young generation today. A vlog is a recording video which lasts normally 5-10 minutes for an episode that aims to send a message to viewers for a purpose of such entertainment, speech, convincing or just telling stories, tips, and diaries by pictures or the voice of represented person on the video. Japanese American blogger Ryan Higa is a well-known icon of vlogger, his channel on YouTube reached 1,3 billion times of view and 7.6 million subscribers. This is a successful example of vlog to promote online media communication that should be followed. RelationshipGames should improve their blog by posting vlog with interesting contents regularly, a short video is always worthier than thousand words.

#### **6.5.4 Photo contest**

Photo contest is a future plan of RelationshipGames for social media campaign which is probably organized on Facebook. The biggest benefit of organizing a photo contest is to connect fans together and to pull more new audiences. Currently, there are different options of application on Facebook or software to run a photo contest, but some of them require payment for using. Instagram is the most popular application used on Facebook for sharing and editing pictures, hosting photo campaign.

Before setting up a photo contest, it is vital to make a survey such as a poll survey for fans for generating ideas about topics of the photo contest and estimated number of participation; with more than 1000 fans on RelationshipGames fan page, idea contribution from those people is remarkable. General topic is about relationship but it must be more specific, for example, “romantic moments of a couple” or a funny topic such as “awkward

moments of a couple”. Detail of a photo contest should be announced on publication, for example rule of a photo contest (limited number of photo for a couple, size of photos, clear pictures, etc), deadline of submission, and rewards for the best and second photo. Evaluation for photos must be fair in publicity based on number of fans and participants votes.

After the photo contest, collecting feedbacks from audiences and participants is important step to organize a better contest in the future. Besides, thank statement and apology statement if inconvenience happened during the contest must be announced. In general, photo contest is a attractive competition for those who are interested in photography; via social networking more audiences may pay attention and support when there is a photo contest.

## **6.6 Evaluation and control**

Evaluation of the 4 strategic media methods (Facebook, Twitter, Blog and Photo contest) for PR purpose is based on three key elements: economy, effectiveness and efficiency. In general, all of the media tools is cost saving for free use and they are interact to each other, effectiveness means “*doing right things*” and efficiency means “*doing things right*”.

With based game application, wide range of users and a number of fans, Facebook is the top selection for media communication plan of RelationshipGames. The most effectiveness of Facebook on marketing communication is to reach numerous audiences quickly without any boundaries; that is essential to improve PR activities as well as brand’s image.

Like other social networking, Twitter is free and ranks behind Facebook of users number. RelationshipGames has been utilizing Twitter to improve PR in UK market for its good reputation there. At this moment, Twitter is not efficient enough for RelationshipGames due to new establishment, but this social

networking plays like a micro-blogging with live & direct messages interaction with audiences.

Blog is a main activity of RelationshipGames that attracts readers for its topics about relationship tips. Due to regularly published posts, traffic of visits is remaining stably. Vlog – Video blog is expected to achieve more effectiveness, it pulls more audiences for vision that is considered to be better than word blogs.

Photo contest is a future plan of RelationshipGames which aims to connect audiences, to create an entertainment competition for photography lovers and to improve PR and marketing communication purpose obviously. However, the effectiveness of photo contest is still a question mark before running the program that is why a poll survey for photo contest idea, information about number of participants, prizes should be made for “*pre-testing*” to evaluate precisely.

	Facebook	Twitter	Blog	Photo contest
Economy	Low cost	Low cost	Low cost	Low cost
Effectiveness	Reaching wide range of audiences	Support the other media communication tools	Remaining traffic of the blog’s visits	Expecting to connect audiences together
Efficiency	Utilizing a thousand fans to organize real events	Role as micro-blogging and PR in UK	Innovation such as Vlog for increasing blog’s effectiveness	Improving brand’s image and PR

*Table 1. Evaluation on media communication methods of RelationshipGames*

The above table shows core evaluation for the three criteria: economy, effectiveness and efficiency (based on the section 5.5) of RelationshipGames

media and PR methods. Effectiveness expresses the adequate consequence of investment, while efficiency is the desire gain with the less effort. In short, RelationshipGames is showing its effectiveness in each media tools, the future plan is to achieve goals in the efficiency criteria. However, this is just a “*pre-testing*” step and evaluation in advance, precise evaluation is able to make after finishing the whole plan.

In this case, efficiency control is probably the best choice for RelationshipGames because this type of control emphasizes on evaluation of improving efficiency and impact of marketing expenditures. Although Facebook is the major media communication tools of the company, there is almost no sign of increasing “likers” on their fan page when remaining low frequency of audiences interaction on Twitter. Facebook is currently running out of ideas in creativity since they created a communication revolution 9 years ago, so that RelationshipGames should not rely mainly on this social network. Photo contest and Vlog are innovation steps in marketing communications that is deserved to try as soon as possible while the competitors may be stuck in ideas for PR strategy as well. Business direction is the most important thing RelationshipGames should reconsider at this moment. The big question is that are they entering game industry officially with a real product or just roaming around social networks with a virtual product?

## 7. CONCLUSION

This marketing communication plan was built and developed based on the author's personal interest and suggestions from CEO Mari Parviainen of RelationshipGames. During the time working for the case company as a trainee, the plan for this study was shaped gradually that connected to the near future strategy in marketing communication of RelationshipGames.

At this moment, growing marketing communication is the most essential task of the case company. For the dynamic and new innovation of marketing communication, this plan was designed based on the form of integrated marketing communication linked to media communication. The current situation of the case company is proper with this design due to its desired development of coherent connection between media and marketing.

By providing limited information and intransparent prospect of the case company, the author is not able to ensure the accurate plan. PR and media implementation strategy and evaluation in this study are just forecast ideas, situation of market or reaction of audiences may change in reality. For this reason, to apply the plan, it must be flexible to adapt to the real condition. However, the outline of this plan is able to use as a root to orient RelationshipGames marketing communication strategy.

During processing the plan some obstacles was found. The first problem of the case company is narrow budget. Although all of media methods in this plan is cost saving, more investment on media implementation, PR activities in real life and the game application should be made. The second difficulty RelationshipGames faces is that their product is intangible and not sticky enough, for this reason, it is hard to introduce a clear product to new clients. However, marketing and PR activities are currently priority tasks for RelationshipGames before developing the game's quality.

Another thing RelationshipGames should concern is about their competitors. Tracking their movements in product development, social networking and marketing social media, then creating an unique recognition of RelationshipGames brand in audiences views. Hopefully, this integrated marketing communication plan is useful for RelationshipGames in improving their reputation and PR strategy in the near future.

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## APPENDIX

### *Interview questions of the author to Mari Parviainen – CEO of RelationshipGames*

1. What are the 3 biggest markets in Europe you focus on PR and media?

– UK

2. Describe briefly your PR and media plan in the near future.

Main focus is on following:

– Facebook marketing (Facebook page and events)

– Twitter

– Blog

– Press releases to medias

3. What is the purpose of your use in social media ?

– Marketing is mainly done in social media.

4. Are you going to make more development for your company image on Pinterest ?

– Pinterest marketing is not in the short term plan.

5. Do you have any ideas for social media campaign for your company ?

– Facebook events (planned)

– Photos contest (in the future)

6. Do you have any innovation in the game content? For example, add new things such as missions, features to the game.

- Seasonal missions
7. Who are your main target groups of client?
- 25-44 years old English speaking couples in Facebook
8. How is the recent situation of marketing communication of the company?
- Mainly through Facebook pages, Twitter and blog
9. How do you define your SWOT analysis of your company?
- Strength: Relationship problems are real problem, reality game
  - Weaknesses: Reality game in Facebook, company funding
  - Opportunities: Wide target market
  - Threats: Not enough sticky product
10. Could you tell me challenges you faced when expanding social media in your markets?
- Challenge with Facebook is that Facebook has restricted the amount of fans see posts in company Facebook pages (because Facebook wants companies to promote posts)
  - Challenge with product stickiness
11. Do you have any plan to improve company image on Facebook as well as on the main website?
- Always trying to improve. Please suggest how. 😊
12. Who are your biggest competitors currently and in future?
- Relationship Games is competing for users' time with other social games and media, such as Facebook (plus Facebook's social games) and television.

In a narrower sense, Relationship Games' competitors, some of which are listed below, are providers of other computer and mobile reality games.

Potential competitors:

**Kahnoodle**

<http://www.kahnoodle.com/>

**Duet**

<http://duet.me/>

<http://crushlovely.com/>

**Tokii**

<https://tokii.com/tokii/SignIn.aspx>

**Icebreak**

<http://theicebreak.com/>

**Between**

<http://appbetween.us/>

**The Love Language Challenge**

<http://www.lovelanguagechallenge.com>

13. How do you get familiar with your target market?

– We get familiar on our target market on Facebook (Relationship Games Facebook page) and with user survey (can be found in our game and Facebook page).

14. Do you have any idea for PR & media implementation campaign plan in near future? For example, more features, events on Facebook, Twitter, blog, etc. (I am planning some ideas and strategy for RG, but I still need all your suggestions)

– We have just tried out our first Facebook event: Candlelight Dinner on the Earth Hour (<https://www.facebook.com/events/140488462790637/>). We are planning to have some more Facebook events on the near future.

Blog posts are published in the near future as well. Please propose some more ideas for the media and viral marketing.

15. How do you evaluate your media and PR campaign ?

– Media campaigns are evaluated by number of press mentions. Other campaigns are evaluated by number of Facebook page likes

16. Do you have a plan for advertising or image promotion of RG?

– No plan.

17. How is the situation of your media list? For example, tell me about what online & offline magazines or blogs you have connected or planned to publish articles about RG, etc.

– We haven't connected media recently.