RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION

AND

TRADITIONAL AND CONSUMER GENERATED MEDIA

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Executive summary

Purpose: Current research [1] compared the differences in terms of perception of trustworthiness and emotional appeal of traditional and consumer generated marketing media and [2] evaluated the correlation between factors of the recently developed relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) with the perception of a marketing action by actual customers of a firm, to see whether these factors should be considered in firm’s marketing communication strategy. Additionally, the researchers compared the correlations between traditional and consumer generated media types to the relationship communication factors, effectively combining the two researched subjects.

Design and execution: The research utilized quantitative research approach relying on simple random sampling technique within fitness and recreational settings.

Findings/Implications: Data analysis confirmed that there is a consistent difference between traditional and consumer generated media in terms of perception of trustworthiness and partial and not consistent difference in terms of emotional appeal. Mild correlation between consumer unique factors of relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and perception of the marketing action have been confirmed, with these correlations remaining consistent between traditional and consumer generated media. The findings suggest that traditional and consumer generated media have varying impacts on consumer’s perception of marketing action and that incorporating consumer unique factors of relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) in marketing communication strategy may benefit the firm in relationship building and integrated marketing communication.

KEYWORDS: relationship communication, relationship marketing, integrated marketing communication, traditional media, consumer generated media, meaning creation.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.............................................................................................................I

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................. 1

1.1 BACKGROUND: .................................................................................................................. 1

1.2 PROBLEM DISCUSSION...................................................................................................... 5

1.2.1 Theoretical contribution .......................................................................................... 6

1.2.2 Practical contribution ............................................................................................... 8

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION ................................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER 2. METHODOLOGY ................................................................................................. 10

2.1 INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN.................................... 10

2.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY .............................................................................................. 10

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH .................................................................................................. 12

2.4 RESEARCH DESIGN ......................................................................................................... 13

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAME OF REFERENCE ............................................................ 15

3.1 THE RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION MODEL ......................................................... 15

3.1.1 Meaning based perspective .................................................................................. 15

3.1.2 Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) ...................................................... 19

3.1.3 Relationship marketing ....................................................................................... 24

3.1.4 Contribution of the IMC and relationship marketing ......................................... 27

3.2 TRADITIONAL AND CONSUMER GENERATED MEDIA (CGM) .................................... 28

3.2.1 Traditional marketing media ................................................................................. 28

3.2.2 Consumer Generated Media (CGM) .................................................................... 31

3.2.3 Perception of trustworthiness and emotional appeal of marketing media .......... 34

3.3 THEORETICAL POINT OF DEPARTURE ....................................................................... 34

CHAPTER 4. EMPIRICAL METHOD .......................................................................................... 38

4.1 RESEARCH SETTINGS ...................................................................................................... 38

4.2 PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION .................................................................. 40

4.2.1 Sampling procedures ........................................................................................... 40

4.3 SURVEY DESIGN ........................................................................................................... 42

4.3.1 Variables ............................................................................................................. 43

4.3.2 Survey layout ....................................................................................................... 46

4.3.3 Data analysis ....................................................................................................... 47

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ......................................................................................... 47

CHAPTER 5. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS ....................................................................................... 49

5.1 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 49

5.2 STATISTICAL RELIABILITY MEASURES .................................................................... 50

5.3 STATISTICAL EVALUATION OF PERCEPTION OF TRADITIONAL AND CONSUMER GENERATED MEDIA ............................................................. 53

5.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION FACTORS .......... 55

5.4.1 Statistical analysis of the combined impact of the relationship communication factors on perception of the marketing action ............................................................... 55

5.4.2 Statistical analysis of the separate impact of the relationship communication factors on perception of the marketing action ......................................................................... 56

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION ....................................................................................................... 58

6.1 PERCEPTION DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND CONSUMER GENERATED MEDIA ................................................................. 58

6.2 RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS ............................ 59

6.2.1 IMC implications .................................................................................................. 60

6.2.2 Relationship marketing implications .................................................................... 60

6.3 INDIVIDUAL COMPARISON OF TRADITIONAL AND CONSUMER GENERATED MEDIA IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK ........................................................................................................ 61

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS .................................................................. 63

7.1 CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................. 63
Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background:
In recent marketing literature the developments focusing on relationship building with the firm’s customer base and marketing tools enabling these developments have been discussed throughout past 10 years. On the one hand, the discussion about development of the relationship communication with the customers by taking into account specific customer related characteristics has been emphasized by various researches within the marketing communication and advertising fields (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Finne & Grönroos, 2009). On the other hand, the emergence of new digital communication channels, which enabled the firm to personalize communication on individual level, triggered changes to the marketing strategies and techniques enabling better understanding of consumer behavior and consequent shift in focus towards relationship building with the customers (Deighton, 1996; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Current research will focus on evaluation of the relationship communication framework utilizing recently developed theoretical model on the subject (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and compare communication media types in an effort to expend both theoretical and practical implications within marketing field.

Recent relationship communication theory suggests that after a marketing action is executed by the firm, the meaning creation is derived from the marketing action by the consumer on individual level, and is being influenced by a group of factors unique to an individual consumer (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). It is essential to acknowledge that these factors are structured and touch upon individual psychological, sociocultural and behavioral characteristics of an individual recipient of the marketing/business communication. Therefore, if these individual factors have indeed impact on the meaning creation process by the recipient of the message and can be grouped together within a structured theoretical framework it is logical to suggest that from a marketing perspective it might be possible to incorporate these factors within communication process and relationship building with the customer. It is also essential to acknowledge that individual factors that comprise relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) have been developed in the past three decades and are based on a number of previous researchers (McCracken 1986; 1987; Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Fournier, 1991; Domzal & Kernan, 1992; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos 2004).

Historically, in terms of communication most of the contemporary businesses remain focused on the inside-out view on the communication process which portrays a firm as a sole initiator of the communication process and the consumer as a passive recipient of the marketing message (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, pp. 179-180). The relationship communication framework focuses on meaning creation process, which is unique to an individual consumer and attempts to answer what happens to consumer’s vision of advertising (McCracken, 1986, p. 121). However, while this process is cognitive and unique to every individual, it can be influenced by a structured set of factors that impact the process of meaning creation (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183). Practically speaking, under conventional perspective on marketing communication the firm initiates communication process by developing a marketing message and delivering this message via one or several communication channels, all recipients of the message within targeted cluster of customer base are expected to have similar understanding of the marketing message. This approach is explicitly evident if the reader considers classical linear
communication models, such as Lasswell’s model (1948) of communication, Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model (1948, p.4) and Berlo’s communication model (1960, p. 72). In reality, however, the process of deriving meaning from any message or communication is an individual cognitive process, which incorporates sociocultural aspects of individual experiences and behavior (Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 333). Therefore, hypothetically, the efficiency of marketing communication can be potentially improved if the factors that contribute to individual meaning creation process can be incorporated effectively within communication process by a firm.

Under **relationship communication** perspective the meaning from a marketing action by the firm is created by the consumer and is based on *time* and *situational* dimension first introduced in Mick and Buhl research (1992, p. 333), and is unique to an individual consumer (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183). This implies that for a successful long term relationship development with a customer, a firm should be able to at least consider, or ideally incorporate within its marketing communication the two broad dimensions that shape consumer meaning creation process.

On the one hand, the *time* dimension within the relationship communication framework constitutes a continuum from past to expected future (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 85) and is focused on the customer, whereas under traditional marketing communication perspective, majority of marketing actions by the firm is predominantly focused on present objectives of the firm (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183-184). Finne and Grönroos define *time* dimension in terms “context (that) refers to the receiver’s perception of the history and envisioned future of his/her relationship with the sender” (2009, p. 193). Consequently, the time dimension incorporates two factors that shape meaning creation by the consumer’s *historical* and *future* factors in terms of marketing communication (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185). Neither *historical* nor *future* factors within *time* dimension have been previously well researched in the literature, and more importantly are largely ignored by the marketing practitioners, who often favor reliance on efficient delivery of the marketing communication via multitude of different communication media (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183-185).

On the other hand, the *situational* dimension within the relationship communication model covers *external* and *internal* factors that impact meaning creation by the consumer through the evaluation of cultural and individual contexts respectively in the meaning creation process, that are not related to the *time* dimension (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185; p. 193). In other words, *situational* dimension is related to the recipient of marketing message, and may not be related to the firm at all. Yet, since it shapes the meaning creation process by the recipient of the message, it may be important in relationship building effort by the firm. Much like factors related to the *time* dimension, neither *internal* nor *external* factors within *situational* dimension have been well researched in previous studies. Yet, from practical standpoint there are numerous examples when the marketers failed to address for instance cultural differences (which relate to *external* factors of the relationship communication model) by marketing products in a new geographical location which led to inefficient or compromised marketing campaigns.

Contrary to revised Schramm’s classic communication model (1971) in which communication and meaning creation is achieved through encoding and decoding of the message by both the sender and the receiver of the message, under relationship
communication framework both focus and meaning creation shifts closer towards recipient of the message and factors associated with his/her particular time and situational settings.

Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 184) argue that only by incorporating time and situational dimension within the marketing communication process the communication can truly become integrated, and therefore more efficient relationship with the customer can be achieved. This is consistent with integrated marketing communication theory, and specifically Duncan and Moriarty research (1998, p. 6-8; refer to figure 3.5). Consequently, taking the relationship communication perspective in mind, which essentially suggests that for the marketing communication to be effective and for a firm to be able to build a successful relationship with the customer, a firm should incorporate individual factors related to the consumer’s meaning creation process within its integrated communication strategy. The ideas about integrated communication strategy by the firm were pioneered in the early 1990’s, specifically the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has been widely discussed in the literature and over the past 20 years was one of the most essential driving forces within marketing field (Prensky et al, 1996, pp. 167-183; Kitchen et al, 2004, pp. 20-23; Schultz & Patti, 2009, pp.76-82). In contrast to relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), IMC predominantly focuses on technical integration of a multitude of communication media channels to efficiently deliver a marketing message to the designated target audience. Due to recent developments in digital communications, there has been a noticeable shift to IMC adoption by many businesses of all sizes, partially because new digital communication media channels enabled cost efficient marketing strategies for various firms (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 5).

There has been a number of definitions aiming to capture the nature of IMC, the earlier definitions of the concept were formulated focused around the use of a multitude of marketing communication channels in attaining new customers, specifically stating that IMC is “the strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organization to collectively influence its perceived value” (Keegan, Moriarty & Duncan, 1992, p. 631). But with the development of the communication systems, digital networks and advances in database management in recent years the above definition does not reflect the contemporary reality of the concept (Schultz  & Patti, 2009, p. 81). A more modern interpretation of the IMC concept has been recently outlined by one of the pioneers within IMC field which incorporates the changes to the marketing field in the past decade:

“Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive marketing communications programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, employees and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences. The goal is to generate both short term financial returns and build long-term shareholder value.” (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000 cited in Kitchen et al, 2004, p 1419; Schultz 2006, p. 6).

On the one hand and in contrast with relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), IMC focuses predominantly on the firm. On the other hand, however, the integration of firm’s marketing activities and therefore communication is perceived as a value adding activity. Therefore, incorporating relationship communication theory,
given that factors within the theoretical model have an actual impact on consumer’s perception of marketing action and meaning creation process, with IMC framework might improve the overall effectiveness of firm’s marketing effort.

The relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) is also closely convergent with the relationship marketing theory. In essence relationship marketing is a wide-ranging discipline which covers both relationship communication and partially IMC. Therefore, the theories outlined within relationship communication framework and their incorporation with the IMC developments have profound implications on the relationship marketing in general. The relationship marketing concept was outlined in the scientific literature as an emerging factor in the firm’s ability to provide superior service quality and harness the relationship with the customer (Berry, 1995, pp. 237-238). It is essential to note that the focus of the relationship marketing is primarily on relationship creation with the customer through marketing tools via the means of customization, tailoring and communication of the firm’s offer to the final customer (Berry, 1995, p. 238), which is similar in essence to the relationship communication perspective (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Yet, there are profound differences in the three, so far, discussed concepts. First, the relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) focuses predominantly on communication and is largely influenced by the concepts derived from psychology, whereas the relationship marketing is much broader concept that encapsulates all of the fields and tools that may have influence on the firm’s relationship with a customer (Berry, 1995, p. 238). Second and contrary to conventional relationship marketing perspective, the relationship communication view specifically enables the consumer to trigger the communication with the firm from the outside of firm’s boundaries (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 180), which should ideally be considered and integrated by the firm within its communication strategy and relationship building. And third, it is essential to realize that IMC is not the same as relationship marketing, primarily because IMC deals predominantly with efficient communication with the targeted audience utilizing specific marketing communication channels rather than relationship building per se, which is essentially objective of the relationship marketing (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119; Grönroos, 2004, p. 102). It is also worthy of noting that relationship marketing and IMC are sometimes used almost interchangeably in some instances, which is not entirely accurate given the previous discussion (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119; Grönroos, 2004, p. 102).

The relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) is used as one of the key underlining concepts for the current research and its relation and implications for both IMC and relationship marketing are essential to understanding of the theoretical point of departure for this research. The emergence of relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), and the development of IMC and relationship marketing have not occurred in vacuum. The need to assess consumer meaning creation, build relationship with the customer, and utilize new communication techniques can be, in part, attributed to the recent developments in information technologies, namely digital communication channels, and most recently consumer generated media channels.

**Consumer Generated Media**

During the last several years new digital communication channel have been on the rise globally. Specifically, with the emergence of new hybrid element of promotion mix, Consumer Generated Media (CGM) or User Generated Content (UGC), the customers...
gained not only new abilities to communicate back with the company, but also to create, share and communicate with other customers and stakeholders, significantly altering the general characteristics of conventional communication channel (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 360). CGM incorporates any content created by stakeholders directly, remotely or unrelated to the firm like blogs, online communities, user comments etc. Since the concept of CGM is relatively new there is no standardized definition of it in the literature. Wunsch-Vincent and Vickery (2007, p. 4) define it by three primary characteristics: “i) content made publicly available over the Internet, ii) which reflects a certain amount of creative effort, and iii) is created outside of professional routines and practices.” Majority of the definitions normally reflect a non-profit customer’s creation of the content and viral distribution over digital networks (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 358; Schaedel & Clement, 2010, pp. 18-20).

These characteristics of the CGM, at least hypothetically, set them apart from more conventional marketing communication channels and potentially may shape the perception of the marketing messages created by the firm. In regard to relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), it is essential to identify if there is indeed a noticeable difference in terms of consumer perception of the CGM and conventional media, because if such a difference can be identified, various levels of integration of the time and situational factors may be necessary given specific communication media to achieve the most effective relationship communication.

The theories and concepts discussed within current research touch upon various fields within marketing discipline. Further in-depth discussion of the underlining theoretical basis of the research will be conducted in the theoretical frame of reference chapter (refer to Chapter 3).

1.2 Problem discussion

During the course of the past 25 years both concepts of IMC and relationship marketing have been extensively discussed in the literature and have significantly evolved to reflect the changing nature of marketing and business strategy in general (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Duncan & Moriarty 1999; Kitchen & Brignell, 2004; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008; Schultz & Patti, 2009; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Berry, 2002; Gummesson, 2008a). Partly through this evolution, and partly incorporating the theories contributing to the consumer meaning creation process, a new relationship communication model has been proposed, which combines the characteristics of psychology behind consumer’s meaning creation, relationship marketing approach in terms of firm’s relationship with stakeholders and IMC in terms of integration of the communication with the stakeholders and firm’s customer relationship management (CRM) system (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, pp. 185-189). The model specifically focuses on multi-dimensional meaning creation by the recipient of the marketing message through the evaluation of recipient’s time (historical and future) and situational (internal and external) factors related to the meaning creation process and argues for the need for consideration of these factors within IMC and relationship building (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 188).

On the one hand, from theoretical point of view the notion that the meaning creation that is based on certain individual factors unique to a particular recipient of a marketing message actually alters or has a significant impact on the perception of a marketing
communication by a firm is a plausible assumption. From practical standpoint, in terms of marketing implementation, this assumption is useful only if the factors that impact recipient’s meaning creation process can be effectively identified and measured. Relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) attempts to address this theoretical gap by identifying two broad dimensions, with two factors each, that contribute to the individual consumer’s meaning creation process. Therefore, the researchers acknowledge that it is theoretically possible to measure the impact that these factors have on individual meaning creation process, specifically on the perception of a marketing action, by a firm and consequently incorporate them within marketing communication strategy.

On the other hand, marketing action by a firm is defined within this research as marketing message and marketing communication media channel utilized to deliver this message. From practical standpoint it is not effective to separate the message from the media channel that is being utilized to deliver the message. Consequently, it can be argued that the communication media can also be a factor influencing meaning creation process by the recipient of the message. The preceding introductory discussion identified a group of communication media, like traditional or consumer generated media, within which the communication channels have similar technical characteristics. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the level of impact of the communication channel varies based on the specific characteristics of the media type, to which the channel belongs (for instance CGM).

Therefore, to execute this type of study, the research will compare consumers’ perception of a marketing action within a specific business environment. The researchers will aim to present a similar or the same marketing message to the group of actual customers of the business utilizing different communication channel and evaluate their perception of the marketing action based on the predefined factors, such as trustworthiness and emotional appeal (refer to section 3.2.3). If there is a consistent difference in perception between the communication media types, the researchers will aim to identify if the factors contributing to the consumer’s meaning creation process of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) actually impact the meaning creation process and if this impact actually differs based on a specific communication media type. If there is no consistent difference in perception between the communication types, the level of impact of the factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) can still be measured.

### 1.2.1 Theoretical contribution

Current research will combine and address several distinct theoretical gaps that have been identified by the researchers. First, the meaning creation process in light of marketing relationship communication has not been discussed vividly within academic community. There were only several studies initially addressing and trying to identify the specific factors that might have influence on consumers’ meaning creation process of the marketing and business communication (McCracken, 1986; Wallendorf, Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Mick & Buhl, 1992). From these earlier studies more complex theoretical frameworks began to emerge proposing the actual utilization of these factors in a structured way, that might enhance not only marketing communication, but also have impact on the overall business performance (Fournier, 1991; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000). One of the most recent theoretical models by Finne and Grönroos
(2009) combined these factors in a structured theoretical framework, predominantly relying on earlier qualitative researchers and models that identified sets of potential factors that might have influence on consumer meaning creation (Domzal & Kernan, 1992; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos 2004). Relying on these theoretical developments there were no empirical studies conducted utilizing quantitative format and aiming to measure the level of correlations between these factors and perception of the marketing action, essentially confirming the importance and validity of the existing researches. Current research will also bring the two specific communication media types to the discussion aiming to improve the understanding of the factors that impact the perception of a marketing action and consequently meaning creation process in light of different marketing communication media.

Second, in terms of IMC theoretical developments, majority of previous researches where predominantly concerned with technical characteristics of the communication process (Keegan, Moriarty & Duncan, 1992; Schultz and Kitchen, 2000). However, considering businesses’ move from single transactional approach to a more integrated relationship building approach in the past two decades (Gummesson, 1987) IMC has been changing accordingly. The consideration of the specifically structured individual factors that might be incorporated within IMC strategy is another poorly covered academic field within IMC, which this research will aim to address. This will enable a more relationship oriented view on IMC which essentially reflects current integrated relationship building approach discussed by Gummesson (1987) and Duncan and Moriarty (1998) and will aim to bring IMC and relationship marketing theories closer together.

Third, any type of marketing communication is normally transmitted via one or several communication channels and does not occur on its own (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119). Previously discussed traditional and consumer generated media have certain specific characteristics, and while the former type of communication media is relatively old, the latter, consumer generated media, is relatively new and has distinctive characteristics (Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008, pp. 19-20). Current research within communication media has predominantly focused on identifying the underlying technical characteristics of a specific media type, for instance consumer generated media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 358). However, the differences in perception of these media types by the recipients of the message based on individual psychological, sociocultural, and behavioral characteristics have been largely ignored within academic community. If the differences in perception can be identified specifically between traditional and consumer generated media, not only the unique factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), but also media types have to be considered within marketing communication process. This theoretical gap has not been addressed in previous marketing researchers which evaluated various media types. Addressing these potential differences is indispensable for any type of marketing communication, because all of the interactions between the firm and other stakeholders essentially are being conducted within one or several communication media channels and therefore further understanding of differences between various media types has the potential to improve both theory and practical utilization of these media.
There are several theoretical gaps that this research aims to address. The researchers strongly believe that combining relationship communication theory and evaluating it by adding marketing media types will contribute to a clearer overall view, confirm and justify further developments within academic field, as well as provide additional insights in theoretical developments in relationship communication, relationship marketing in general, integrated marketing communication and highlight the differences between traditional and consumer generated media based on perception rather than technical differences between these two media types, which has not been explicitly discussed in previous studies.

1.2.2 Practical contribution

From practical standpoint, there are several important contributions as well. First, the evaluation of the difference in perception of marketing communication media types may improve effectiveness of utilization of the communication channels that fall within a specific communication media type, as well as provide cost efficient management of these media types. If there is a consistent difference between traditional and consumer generated media, the utilization of each media channel may be used in a more targeted approach for a specific tactical action. The ability to generalize characteristics based on media type rather than media channel has the potential to provide a more robust and cost efficient marketing management essentially not requiring marketing managers to identify all of the characteristics of the media channel from scratch. Specifically, the differences in traditional and consumer generated media have not been previously researched, while being largely utilized. The increasing use of consumer generated media is reflected by the recent severe global increases in marketing budgets for these media (Duboff & Wilkerson, 2010, p. 33), however the decisions to utilize these media is predominantly based on technical characteristics rather than consumers’ perception of the media. This research will address this practical gap, effectively considering the differences in perception of media type rather than technical characteristics.

Second, the impact of individual factors contributing to consumer’s meaning creation may play a significant role in a marketing communication process, specifically in IMC and relationship building strategies, because if the correlation between the perception of the marketing action can be linked to the factors presented in relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) this may potentially require rethinking of previously largely ignored factors under IMC and relationship building strategies. Current research will address these previously under researched field aiming to identify the correlations between relationship communication factors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and perception of marketing media type, essentially aiming to prove whether there is indeed a need for practical consideration of these factors within firm’s communication and relationship building marketing strategies.

Third, there might be different levels of correlations given traditional and consumer generated media types in light of relationship communication factors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Potentially, if the perception of traditional and consumer generated media types is confirmed to vary, the correlation values of the said media types and relationship communication factors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) may differ as well. This would imply different levels in terms of incorporation of these factors given specific communication media type, which is directly related to the effectiveness of the specific marketing action. Consequently, current research will aim to answer these questions and
provide improved understanding for marketing professionals how and which consumer unique factors, namely relating to time and situational dimensions should be considered in marketing communication and relationship building strategies.

1.3 Research question

Current research will focus on answering two broad questions. First, the perception of the marketing action in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal will be compared. Therefore the first research question can be summed up as:

Is there a difference in terms of consumer’s perception of trustworthiness and emotional appeal of the marketing action between the traditional and consumer generated media?

Second, the correlation between the factors contributing to the individual meaning creation process identified within relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and the perception of marketing action will be identified, aiming to answer the following research question:

Should the individual factors contributing to the consumer’s meaning creation process be integrated within marketing communication of the firm?

Lastly, the levels of correlation between the factors contributing to consumer’s meaning creation will be evaluated based on the communication media type, which might provide a better explanation in which cases and with which media integration of these factors is more appropriate. This specific knowledge is relevant to both academics and marketing professionals because it touches upon underlining marketing theories, as well as practical marketing implementation strategies.

The researchers strongly believe that current research will not only contribute to multiple academic fields, by essentially providing a more unified view in terms of integration of individual psychological, sociocultural, behavioral characteristics, perception of marketing action in light of different marketing communication media on purely academic level, but also discuss practical issues that contemporary marketing professional are faced on daily basis. Tackling these specific research questions is a logical continuation of the academic researches within relationship communication, integrated marketing communication and relationship marketing fields that have received and continue receiving increased attention by both academics and marketing practitioners.
Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 Introduction to research philosophy and design

There are four theoretical traditions, namely scientific naturalism, Marxism, constructionism and constructivism, which can be potentially utilized within academic research (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 75). The researches have evaluated these theoretical traditions in light of research purpose and specific research questions (refer to section 1.3) to be able to adequately execute current research. The summary of the evaluated research traditions is presented in table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditions</th>
<th>Scientific naturalism</th>
<th>Critical Realism (Marxism)</th>
<th>Critical theory (Marxism)</th>
<th>Constructionism</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Objectivism</td>
<td>Historical materialism</td>
<td>Dialectical materialism</td>
<td>Hermeneutics, phenomenology</td>
<td>Discussive anti0humanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Structural associations</td>
<td>Mechanisms</td>
<td>Ideologies</td>
<td>Meaning and interaction</td>
<td>Linguistic structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Positivism</td>
<td>Intervention to expose mechanisms</td>
<td>Identification of contradictions in reality</td>
<td>Interpretivism</td>
<td>Linguistic self-referentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Primarily quantitative</td>
<td>Philosophical analysis</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
<td>Qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Surveys and experiments</td>
<td>Surveys and experiments</td>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>Interviews and (unstructured) observations</td>
<td>Textual analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Prediction and control</td>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Emancipation</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Relativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations</td>
<td>Structural functionalism</td>
<td>Variations across the biological and social sciences</td>
<td>Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas</td>
<td>Symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, ethnomethodology</td>
<td>Structuralism, poststructuralism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: selected philosophical and methodological approach is highlighted in green.

Figure 2.1. Theoretical traditions and their dimensions (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 76)

The researchers adopt ‘scientism’ approach which crucially enables principles adopted in natural sciences to be applied in the study of society (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 75). The discussion of the selected approach in light of alternatives continues in the following sections.

2.2 Research philosophy

Objectivist ontology in regard to psychological phenomena, such as perceptions, sociocultural and behavioral factors, stating that it is real, has definite properties, and therefore can be measured, is utilized within the research (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This
ontological preconception is essential to the entire research because it enables the researchers to adopt the position in which social substances actually exist in reality and are independent from social actors (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 108).

Stemming from objectivist ontology, the research adopts epistemological position of positivism, which is consistent with scientific naturalism approach meaning that the basic rules that are utilized in organizing the knowledge within natural sciences can be transcended and applied within social world (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Therefore enabling the researchers to generate knowledge from empirical data collection (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 76) based on perceptions, sociocultural and behavioral factors related to individual meaning creation represented by time and situational dimensions (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Finne & Grönroos, 2009).

Marxism views “history as the product of social conditions and the actions of people in such conditions” and explores mechanisms under critical realism tradition and ideology under critical theory, specifically rejecting empiricism and viewing material being dialectical (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 77). This scientific tradition has not been utilized in previous meaning based studies that have been evaluated for current research (refer to section 3.1.1). Marxism view on research tradition would not adequately enable the researchers to answer the research questions specifically because the researched issues such as perceptions, behaviors and sociocultural factors touch upon dialectical nature within society, which is not necessarily reflective of current research, because contradictions are not explicitly present within researched topic.

Constructionism and epistemological foundation of interpretivism predominantly focuses on “the researcher’s own ability to reconstruct the meaning that social life has for those engaged in it through the researcher’s own ability to comprehend meaning and belief” (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 78). It is essential to acknowledge that the underlining studies, specifically within meaning based perspective and relationship communication have utilized this research philosophy (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000), however, predominant purpose within these studies was to identify and understand which factors are relevant when considering individual perception of advertising and meaning creation, with focus on meaning and interaction. Current research however, is focused around structured associations between the perceptions, sociocultural and behavioral factors which have already been identified (McCracken, 1986; 1987; Wallendorf, Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Fournier, 1991; Domzal & Kernan, 1992; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and is focused on correlations between these factors. Therefore, constructionism and epistemological foundation of interpretivism is not suitable to effectively answer current research objectives and purpose.

Constructivism “rejects naturalistic explanation in favor of discursive (cultural) determinism of social life,” essentially adopting anti-humanism ontology, and relying on meaningful systems (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 78). Constructivism has not been utilized in studies focusing on perceptions, sociocultural and behavioral factors that have been reviewed by the researchers for current study (refer to section 3.1), primarily because of its anti-humanistic ontology. Such, an approach is not feasible for current study either, because the focus of this research is predominantly on perceptions, sociocultural and behavioral factors, and cannot be explained adopting anti-humanism ontology.
The researchers strongly believe that reliance on objectivist ontology and adoption of epistemological position of positivism is the most appropriate research philosophy given current research objectives and purpose (refer to section 1.3). Other philosophical approaches would not be entirely suitable given current focus of the research on structural correlations and associations between the researched factors. There are however limitations given the adopted position of naturalism, positivism and objectivism for the current research that are discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.2.

2.3 Research approach

There are two main research approaches that are normally utilized within academic field, deductive and inductive (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007, p. 124). This research assumes a deductive view on the research design and theoretical knowledge, meaning that the research questions that are formulated in the section 1.3 will be tested in various observed conditions (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 13-19). The research adopts a funnel structure starting from broad theoretical background, which follows by development of an empirical method, data collection, data analysis, and discussion in an effort to answer the stated theoretical questions. The funnel structure of the research goes along with deductive approach which emphasizes structure and throughout approach in terms of research development and execution (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 13-19).

The amount of variables utilized in this research is limited and clearly stated, which will help to ensure that the researchers will remain focused on the primary objectives of the research. The researchers are not aiming to identify new factors that may contribute to either perception of the marketing action or relationship communication but instead identify the relationships between already defined factors.

While deductive approach is deemed to be the most suitable by the researchers because it relies on previous studies for the research questions (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and is consistent with adopted research philosophy of naturalism, positivism and objectivism, it is necessary to acknowledge that majority of previous underlining studies for current research utilized inductive approach (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988; Fournier, 1991, p. 737; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000). Inductive approach and consequent predominant reliance on qualitative data collection within these researchers was motivated by the exploratory nature of these studies. However, the purpose of current research is to evaluate the correlations between already defined variables, which utilizing inductive approach and relying on qualitative data collection would not be feasible. There are limitations to the selected deductive approach for current study which are discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.2.

The researchers acknowledge that every individual taking part in the research is not absolutely unbiased and is a subject to bounded rationality meaning that the decision making process of every individual is dependent upon the information that they have about the issue at the time, the limitations of their own cognition and the time that the participant of the study is exposed to, for instance, during the data collection process (Gigerenzer & Selten, 2001, p. 4). The researchers will strive to provide sufficient information on the researched subject to the respondents, ensuring minimal ambiguity of the discussed issues and questions by extensive pre-testing of the data collection tools, and providing sufficient time for the respondents to comfortably complete any of
2.4 Research design

Based on research philosophy an experimental design approach has been selected for current study. Specifically, the evaluation of perceptions and cause-and-affect relationships between factors contributing to meaning creation process and perception of communication media a quantitative research method will be utilized. Given the underlining objectives of the research focusing around evaluating the relationships between variables, quantitative approach is deemed to be the most suitable for the study (David & Sutton, 2011, pp. 204-207).

The researchers will strive to detach own personal feelings, values and experiences from the data collection and analysis to ensure objective evaluation of the findings given the adopted research philosophy. The motivation behind the utilization of quantitative design approach and philosophical position of naturalism, positivism and objectivism arose from researches commitment to ensure maximum possible external validity of the results of the research (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 76).

In this research, as previously mentioned, the objective is not to identify new factors that might influence meaning creation process, but instead to effectively quantify these, already existing factors, and objectively incorporate them within the research design, namely self-fulfilling survey. At the core of the research is meaning creation, which is a unique individual cognitive process, however, it is based on sociocultural aspects of individual experiences and behavior, which are represented by time and situational dimensions (Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 333), and each dimension is further split in a set of specific factors (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, pp. 88-90; Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184), which can be measured, namely due to the adopted by the researchers objectivist ontology in regard to psychological phenomena. This enables the researchers to quantify the factors related to individual meaning creation and incorporate them specifically within chosen quantitative research design for current study. This approach allows the researchers to effectively evaluate the relationships between the variables and consequently answer the specific questions posed for this research (refer to section 1.3). The limitations of the quantitative and survey based research design are further discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.2.

The researchers have considered alternative qualitative study design during the course of the research, specifically in light that underlining theoretical studies in the field often opted for qualitative study design (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000). Crucially, however, the research purposes of previous studies (McCracken, 1986; Wallendorf, Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Fournier, 1991; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000) and current research significantly differ. Current research based on selected philosophical, practical approaches, research questions, and general research purpose (refer to section 1.3) focuses on testing the relationships between earlier defined variables, which is consistent with quantitative research design and is deemed to be able to answer better the specific correlation based questions as well as have a higher external validity (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007; David & Sutton, 2011, p. 96).
The selected scientific approach for the current study enables the researchers to quantify and measure the variables that were identified in preceding studies and effectively utilize them in the current quantitative study design. The sampling techniques, data collection strategies and more detailed description of empirical method are discussed in Chapter 4 of this research.
Chapter 3. Theoretical frame of reference
Theoretical frame of reference will now present the underlining theories that have contributed to the development of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and cover the existing research related to Consumer Generated Media (CGM) and traditional communication media utilized in marketing communication.

3.1 The relationship communication model
The conceptual relationship communication model for the study has been pioneered relatively recently by Finne and Grönroos (2009). Despite the relatively new emergence of the theoretical model, the relationship communication field combines a variety of cross disciplinary areas and concepts. Specifically, the relationship communication model has been developed on previous research in meaning creation in communication, relationship marketing, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), and general communication theories.

3.1.1 Meaning based perspective
Meaning based perspective originated in the field of psychology and social studies, namely cultural studies (McCracken, 1987, pp. 71-72). In the 1980's with the global shift to a more service oriented strategies this concept has become increasingly important for advertising and marketing fields and consequently studies emerged that incorporated this perspective within marketing (McCracken, 1986, 1987; Wallendorf, Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Fournier, 1991).

3.1.1.1 Meaning based perspective background
The relationship communication model by Finne and Grönroos (2009) is based on Mick and Buhl meaning based model of advertising experiences (1992) and Edvardsson and Strandvik model of critical incidents in a relational context (2000). In the model of critical incidents the researchers evaluated communication process which was perceived as being unusual or remarkable by the customer (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p.82). Both of these models are further developments of the meaning based perspective within advertising field that the creation of meaning by a consumer is an individual, subjective process and is influenced by various factors such as cultural and social specific factors common to particular settings (McCracken. 1986, p. 121; Wallendorf, Belk, & Heisley, 1988, p. 530; Fournier, 1991, pp. 738-739). Specifically, emphasis in a meaning based perspective within advertising is placed on cultural settings, as a major factor in a consumer meaning creation process (McCracken. 1987, p. 72). The relationship communication model combines the factors related to the consumer meaning creation identified in Mick and Buhl meaning based model of advertising experiences (1992) and Edvardsson and Strandvik model of critical incidents in a relational context (2000), and is consistent with the general meaning based perspective within marketing and advertising fields.

3.1.1.2 Meaning based perspective theoretical developments
On the one hand, Mick and Buhl meaning based model of advertising experiences states that the meaning derived from any type of advertising activity by a firm is a subject to “multiple legitimate interpretations” given specific time and situational dimensions.
(Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 336; p. 333) and consequently may vary depending on various circumstances related to individual experiences of a particular consumer and socio-cultural factors related to the consumer at any given time and location (Mick & Buhl, 1992, pp. 318-321).

On the other hand, Edvardsson and Strandvik model of critical incidents in a relational context (2000), conveys that a series of past and expected future incidents, or experiences with a particular firm influence customer relationship level with the firm (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, pp. 88-90).

The model considers *time* and *situational* dimensions, similar to Mick and Buhl study (1992, p. 333), which have direct influence on the relationship level of the customer with the firm (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 85, pp. 88-90). Yet, more importantly Edvardsson and Strandvik (2000, p. 85) consider *time* dimension to comprise of the *historic, present and future* factors that influence the relationship of the customer with the firm and consequent meaning creation. The perception of the future time factors influencing the relationship with the firm is central, because it provides the possibility of the future interaction with the firm and is not limited to the present time and has profound implications in terms of the relationship communication model (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 86; Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184).

Within the framework of critical incidents in a relational context model the *external* and *internal* contexts are related to the *situational* dimension of the relationship with the firm. The *situational* dimension is comprised of *external* context that is not directly related to the relationship with the firm, but bares the characteristics of a specific market place, and *internal* context that does not directly concern the current relationship with the firm, but bares the issues related to customers’ needs in general and therefore both influence consumer meaning creation (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 86).
The relationship communication model, similarly to Mick and Buhl meaning based model of advertising experiences (1992) and Edvardsson and Strandvik model of critical incidents in a relational context (2000), utilizes the time and situational dimensions within its theoretical framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183). Both dimensions are further characterized by two factors each, which all together or partially influence the meaning creation process by the consumer:

“…a time dimension based on both historical and future factors, relating to the consumer’s perception of a given relationship, and a situational dimension based on external and internal factors, relating to the consumer’s individual context” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183).

The historical factors of the time dimension are based on Mick and Buhl (1992) and Edvardsson and Strandvik (2000) researches and reflect all of the commercial communication and messages as well as non-commercial interactions that shape meaning creation process by the customer throughout his/her past experiences with the firm (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184). These may include specific marketing communication efforts conducted by the firm in the past through various communication channels such as printed advertising, billboards, TV/radio, and/or digital channels, past communication with company representatives not necessarily related to marketing function, such as communication with support personnel, as well as stories and incidents involving firm, or firms products, which occurred in an informal settings through interaction with the individuals that are not necessarily firm’s representatives, such as family, friends, co-workers and etc. (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184).

The future factors of the time dimension are predominantly based on Edvardsson and Strandvik research model (2000, pp. 85-86) and reflect the future expectations of the relationship, such as objectives, goals and etc. (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 86; Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184). Interestingly enough the future factors have not been largely researched within the meaning creation perspective and marketing communication (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184). Majority of the researches in terms of meaning creation as well as communication of the customer with the firm tend to either focus on present communication and meaning creation or take into account past communication only (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1988, p. 36; Fournier, 1991, p. 737; Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 318). Yet, for effective relationship communication the consideration of the entire time dimension, from past to future is necessary because the relationship building process occurs over time and encapsulates both past and future factors (Holmlund 2004; cited in Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 184).

The external and internal factors comprise situational dimension (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, pp. 184-185). The external factors are:

“…trends, traditions, economic situation, the family and alternative choices, including advertising from competing companies and other communications in the surrounding society perceived by the individual.” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185).

These external factors of the relationship communication model were derived from sociocultural, or external influences by the family, friends, cultural background on a specific consumer (Mick & Buhl, 1992, pp. 318-320) and external contexts, or any
relationship with or influence by a third party that may shape the current relationship with the firm (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 86).

The *internal* factors relate to the personal unique characteristics of a customer, such as his/her attitudes, beliefs, interests and identity (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185). These factors were derived from life project concept, or meaning related to self or extended self of the consumer (Mick & Buhl, 1992, pp. 318-319) and internal context, or the behavior and perceptions of the consumer unique to a specific individual (Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000, p. 86).

Given the meaning creation theoretical framework Finne and Grönroos (2009) propose the following relationship communication framework:

![Relationship Communication Model](image)

Figure 3.2. The relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 186).

The sum of the four factors related to *time* and *situational* dimensions influences the meaning creation process by the consumer, yet the influence of the sum of all factors may be different from the influence of a single factor taken independently (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185). It is therefore essential to consider integration of the marketing communication with the customer with all or several factors that influence meaning creation process by the consumer (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185). In light of the current research question it is also plausible to assume that given the possibility of the integration of various factors within the relationship communication model, there might be a difference in terms of factor integration given specific differences between the traditional and consumer generated media utilized in marketing activities.

On the one hand, the idea of the message integration with other communication media given specific consumer’s preferences closely relates to the IMC concept. On the other hand, integration of the factors related to consumer’s meaning creation, and factors specifically related to the time dimension is an approach which has not been explicitly discussed in the relation to IMC. The discussion will now continue focusing around theoretical research linked to IMC, relationship marketing and their relation to the relationship communication model by Finne and Grönroos (2009)
3.1.2 Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

According to Finne and Grönroos (2009), for the successful utilization of the relationship communication model, an integration of factors that contribute to the meaning creation process by the consumer has to be considered similarly to the integration of various communication channels under IMC perspective. The IMC has been discussed explicitly within academic literature in the past 25 years (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Duncan & Moriarty 1997, 1999; Kitchen & Brignell, 2004; Kotler & Armstrong, 2008; Ouwersloot & Duncan, 2008; Schultz & Patti, 2009; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Berry, 1995; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Berry, 2002; Cornelissen, 2003; Gummesson, 2008), yet to completely cover the relationship communication theory, it is essential to discuss the background, and theoretical developments within IMC field.

3.1.2.1 The IMC background

The modern marketing communication techniques began development in the United States in the late 1950’s, because in the post Second World War period the American economy, suffering virtually no damage from the war, emerged as leading supplier of both industrial and consumer goods and services (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 11). Under these circumstances, and given the growing global demand for services the 4Ps model (MacCarthy, 1960) emerged in the marketing field. At the same time in the 1960’s the market as a whole began to change, the global market place became more fragmented and matured, the consumers became more educated and demanded individual approach from the suppliers, and global competition intensified (Grönroos, 1999, p. 327).

In the late 1960’s the abroad competition in the international markets intensified (Deming, 1985, p. 6). Specifically the Japanese manufacturing adopted the techniques emphasizing quality of the product and competitive pricing (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 11). As in the 1970’s the overall production levels began to catch up with the demand, the product margins as well as prices began to rapidly drop, and new marketing techniques aimed at short term sale, namely sale discounts, became utilized across various firms and industries (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 11-12). This, yet again, resulted in the changes and new theories and solutions in managerial approaches such as emergence of theories on competitive advantage (Porter, 1980), new approaches in re-engineering (Majchrzak, & Qianwei, 1996), total quality management (Porter & Parker, 1993; Powell, 1995) and others which reflected on marketing practices as well (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 12) for instance development of relationship marketing theory (Agariya & Singh, 2011, p. 204). Consequently, in light of the new economic environment, with global competition, a more targeted and cost efficient approaches to marketing communication had to be developed and utilized (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 12). In the late 1980’s and early 1990’s the digitalization of production, logistics, and other activities occurred, enabling firms to process massive amounts of information (Berkowitz et al, 1992 cited in Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 12). In terms of marketing communication, the accumulation of extensive information and targeted marketing communication to individual customers became possible, which ultimately triggered the development of new marketing communication approaches, such as IMC (Wang & Jackson, 1993 cited in Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 12-13).

The first references to the IMC concept appeared in the public relations literature in the late 1980’s (Spotts, Lambert, & Joyce, 1998, p. 211). The concept has been discussed
since the early 1990’s and immediately created confusion within the literature, because the cross functional nature of the concept made it relatively hard to come up with a concrete, single definition (Wolter, 1993, p. 21; Spotts, Lambert, & Joyce, 1998, pp. 210-211; Kitchen, Kim, & Schultz, 2008, p. 531). Earlier researches indicated that definition of IMC ranged from the view that it is a corporate communication to the view that it is marketing (Spotts, Lambert, & Joyce, 1998, pp. 210) and in some earlier cases referred to it as “new advertising” or “marketing imperialism” contributing to even further confusion regarding the concept (Duncan & Caywood, 1996, pp.13-14). Even today, there is no single definition of the concept, and the exact definitions vary from an organization to an organization and from a researcher to a researcher (Spotts, Lambert, & Joyce, 1998, pp. 210-212; Kerr et al, 2008, p. 515; Kliatchko, 2008, p. 136; Zvobgo & Melewar, 2011, p. 2). According to some of the researchers, the apparent lack of consensus about the IMC concept contributed to an arguably rather slow development within the field (Kitchen et al, 2004, p. 1418). There are also researches refusing to accept IMC as new phenomenon in marketing, primarily due to the lack of academic definition of the concept, and instead describe it as a management technique (Cornelissen & Lock, 2000, pp. 11-13).

This lack of consistency within academic field in regard to IMC contributes to further ambiguity of the relationship communication model. To ensure that there is as little confusion as possible, several definitions of IMC will now be examined and the most suitable definition for current research will be identified.

3.1.2.2 IMC definition

As previously mentioned, in this chapter there is still no single definition of the IMC concept, yet the varying definitions changed to reflect the differences within the field of marketing and information technologies adopted by firms over time (Kitchen et al, p. 1419). The earlier definitions of the concept stressed the use of multitude of communication channels in firm’s effort to capture new customers (Keegan, Moriarty & Duncan, 1992, p. 631). Yet, with the development of new communication technologies new definitions emerged to reflect these changes (Schultz & Patti, 2009, p. 81). Schultz and Kitchen (2000 cited in Kitchen et al, 2004, p 1419; Schultz 2006, p. 6) proposed the following definition of IMC:

“IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences.”

This is one of the most widely utilized definitions of the concept (Kerr et al, 2008, p. 515; Kliatschko, 2008, p. 134), yet even the authors of this definition agree that there is no single, well-accepted definition of the concept of IMC (Schultz & Patti, 2009, p. 81). Therefore, several other definitions will be presented below in an effort to show the evolution of the concept within the literature over time as well as present a better view on what IMC is. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defined IMC in 1989 as:

“A concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of
communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and PR – and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact through the seamless integration discrete messages” (The American Association of Advertising Agencies, 1989 cited in Christensen, Torp & Firat, 2005, p. 160).

This definition, while outlines the integration, strategic nature of the concept and efficiency does not consider the recipient of the message (Duncan & Caywood, 1996 cited in Christensen, Torp & Firat, 2005, p. 160). The recipient of the message and consequent meaning creation that occurs, is central to the relationship communication framework, therefore making this specific definition not entirely suitable for the purpose of this research. Keegan, Moriarty and Duncan (1992, p. 631 (1992, p. 631), defined IMC as:

“The strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organization to collectively influence its perceived brand value.”

This definition too lacks the consideration of the recipient of the message. A more recent definition by Duncan (2002 cited in Gurău, 2008, p. 171) states that IMC is:

“A cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven purposeful dialogue with them.”

This definition clearly states the cross-functional integration of marketing communication as well as implies building a relationship with the customer (Gurău, 2008, p. 171). This definition is similar to the definition proposed by Schultz and Kitchen (2000 cited in Kitchen et al, 2004, p 1419; Schultz 2006, p. 6), yet has less emphasis on the recipient of the communication. For the purpose of this research definition by Schultz and Kitchen (2000 cited in Kitchen et al, 2004, p 1419; Schultz 2006, p. 6) will be utilized because it is closer related to the relationship communication in terms of more profound integration of the recipient of the message.

3.1.2.3 IMC Theoretical developments

Theoretical developments within IMC have been evolving given increasing digitalization and emergence of new communication media. Schultz and Kitchen (2000, cited in Kitchen et al, 2004, p. 26; Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 19) proposed the following 4 level development process of an IMC within the organization comprising of:

1. Tactical coordination of IMC integration on the basic level, which focuses primarily on the consolidation of marketing communication across departments and centralization of marketing communication (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 19-20)
2. Redefining the scope of marketing communication on the second level, which focuses primarily on switching from corporate driven agenda in terms of marketing communication to a more targeted approach utilizing both internal and external sources, for instance personnel working directly with the customers
is integrated within IMC model within the firm, which consequently involves altering customer perception of a firm of a brand in the direction specified by the marketing and strategic objectives of the firm (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 20-21; Schultz & Walters, 1997, p. 67; Percy, 1997 cited in Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 21)

3. Application of the information technologies on the third level, which focuses primarily on the marketing database management and utilization of digital communication channels, which ultimately enables greater customization and personal approach towards customer communication, combined with improved efficiency in terms of message delivery. The essential challenge for the firm on this level of IMC development is to be able to build communication strategy via information technologies and extensive customer database through the insights obtained in the previous levels which goes beyond basic contact and demographic information on the customers (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 21-24)

4. Strategic and financial integration on the final fourth level, which primarily focuses on the strategic alignment of a firm and resource allocation with IMC. The two primary objectives for a firm on this level is to [1] “be able to measure returns on customer investment” and [2] “to be able to use IMC to drive organizational and strategic directions” (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 24-25)

The graphic presentation of the four levels of IMC integration is depicted in figure 3.3.

![Figure 3.3. The four levels of IMC integration (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, p. 19; taken from Kitchen et al, 2004, p. 26)]

The four levels of IMC integration explicitly identify what the primary objectives of IMC for an organization are. In terms of business communication, efficiency of message delivery, adequate resource allocation and measurability are all important, but alone they are insufficient in an effort of achieving relationship communication, because they do not integrate meaning creation, and specifically do not take into account factors contributing to the meaning creation on individual level.
It is worthy of noting that the traditional perspective on IMC also emphasizes linear and consistent communication across various media (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119). Figure 3.4 depicts five common sources of messages under the IMC perspective.

![Figure 3.4: Five sources of messages under traditional IMC perspective (Calonius 1989; Duncan and Moriarty 1997; Grönroos and Lindberg-Repo 1998 cited in Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 181).](image)

Given figure 3.4 it is evident that under the traditional IMC perspective the communication is focused around the company, rather than a customer (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119; Grönroos, 2004, pp. 104-105). Therefore, the communication process between the customer and the firm is not completely reflected given IMC alone. This has been recognized by the scholars and new models have been proposed to reflect a more natural communication process within IMC framework.

One of the initial studies stressing the issue of customers and other stakeholders integrating marketing communication messages, with other factors influencing firm-customer relationship has been outlined by Duncan and Moriarty (1998, p. 6). The study proposes a marketing relationship based communication model in which the emphasis of communication process falls onto managing the relationship with stakeholders by the marketing managers (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998, p. 6). In this model the marketing communication process is presented as a multidimensional process, that incorporates all of the communication created by the firm through IMC and does not limit communication only to customers and prospects, but also incorporates other stakeholders within the communication process (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998, p. 6-8).

The marketing communication model radically shifts the communication process towards a more integrated approach by specifically recognizing that the relationship with the stakeholders of the firm is normally influenced by all of the actions that the firm performs or chooses not to perform, not just marketing or similar messages a firm consciously releases (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998, p. 8). The graphic presentation of the integrated communication process is presented in figure 3.5:
This approach incorporates both the relationship marketing and IMC theory in an effort to improve marketing communication process of the firm with the outside stakeholders. Yet, in terms of communication the time factors influencing the relationship, and incorporated within the relationship communication framework by Finne and Grönroos (2009) are still ignored, and the focus of the communication process still revolves around the firm, rather than the customer. Duncan and Moriarty research (1998), identifies a shift in IMC theory towards relationship marketing, which combined with previously discussed meaning creation and IMC are fundamental in the development of the relationship communication model.

3.1.3 Relationship marketing

Both IMC and relationship communication concepts are focused around the issue of integrated communication, yet as Finne and Grönroos (2009, pp. 179-180) point out, and given the earlier presented background and contemporary definitions for IMC, the firm is actually driving and integrating the communication process via various communication media, adopting an “inside-out view” on the communication process (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 179). Contrary to this conventional perspective on business communication, under the relationship communication model the focus shifts mainly on the consumer and how consumer performs the integration of the message on an individual level adopting “outside-in view” on the communication process (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 180). In other words, after the firm created a specific marketing message, a better understanding of the final recipient of the message takes priority for a marketer in terms of situational and time dimensions relevant to the consumer.

In light of this perspective, a better knowledge of consumer and firm’s relationship with the consumer is required, an approach which ties the relationship communication model
3.1.3.1 The relationship marketing background

The changes in the marketing field in the twentieth centuries were intense (Ambler, 2005, p. 50-53), specifically the changes to the marketing theories particularly in the 1980’s represent one of the most profound changes in the marketing field as a whole (Webster, 1992, p. 1; Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 20). Appearing in the literature in the early 1980’s the concept of relationship marketing was a rational continuation of the changes to managerial approaches started in the early 1960’s (refer to section 3.1.2.1). And according to Ballantyne, Christopher & Payne (2003, p. 160) “interest in relationship marketing took off to the extent that it became the key marketing issue of the decade.”

The relationship marketing originates from the service marketing research area and was derived largely from the concept pioneered within Nordic School of Services (Grönroos, 1995, p. 252), namely interactive marketing concept, in which the production and consumption of the service are closely related activities (Grönroos, 1978, p. 591), theoretical model of the service firm’s customer relation, in which the service company was first divided into two parts in terms of service delivery, visible part in which the customer can observe or is aware how the service is being delivered and invisible part which customer does not see or is not aware of (Grönroos, 1982, p. 34) and researches on long term interactive relationships with the customer, that extended the need for a business to move from single transactional approach to a more profound long term relationship building approach with the customer (Gummesson, 1987).

3.1.3.2 The relationship marketing definition

The term relationship marketing was first identified by Berry (1983, cited in Berry, 1995, p. 236), and since then a further development of the concept and related theories began to emerge within the literature (Agariya & Singh, 2011, pp. 204-205). The earlier concepts of relationship marketing revolved around the notion of “acquisition and retention of the customers and the resulting profitability” (Nykamp, 2001 cited in Agariya & Singh, 2011, p. 204) whereas the later research on the subject incorporated more areas “acquisition, retention, profitability enhancement, a long-term orientation, and a win–win situation for all stakeholders of the organization” (Agariya & Singh, 2011, p. 228)

Similarly to IMC definitions the multitude of various definitions for the relationship marketing concept appeared in the literature (Agariya & Singh, 2011, pp. 207-211). Yet, it is not until 1990’s that the term relationship marketing became used more broadly (Gummesson, 1997, p. 422). As previously mentioned, terms like interactive marketing, network approach, long term interactive relations and a new concept of marketing were utilized within the field to describe what is essentially became known as relationship marketing (Gummesson, 1997, p. 422). According to Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 20) the concept of relationship marketing “encompasses relational contracting (MacNeil 1980), relational marketing (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh 1987), working partnerships (Anderson and Narus 1990), symbiotic marketing (Varadarajan & Rajaratnam 1986), strategic alliances (Day 1990), co-marketing alliances (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993),

Ideally a proper definition for the concept of relationship marketing should account for all of the possible relationships of the consumer with the firm (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 21). From the practical standpoint, the definitions for the concept reflect the area in which the researcher in relationship marketing specializes in, be it service, direct or industrial marketing area (Morgan and Hunt, 1994, p. 21). A recent research specifically focusing on the definitions of the relationship marketing identified 72 different definitions of the concept throughout the literature (Agariya & Singh, 2011, pp. 207-211). The six most cited defining constructs for the relationship marketing concept were identified: [1] trust, [2] satisfaction/experience, [3] loyalty, [4] commitment, [5] service quality, and [6] communication (Agariya & Singh, 2011, p. 228). Given this specific research, the following definition encapsulating most of the cited constructs has been chosen as the theoretical point of departure:

“The core of relationship marketing is relations, a maintenance of relations between the company and the actors in its micro-environment, i.e. suppliers, market intermediaries, the public and of course customers as the most important actor. The idea is first and foremost to create customer loyalty so that a stable, mutually profitable and long-term relationship is enhanced” (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996, p. 19).

### 3.1.3.3 The relationship marketing theoretical developments

Theoretical developments within the field of relationship marketing have been quiet extensive (Grönroos 1978, 1982, 1995, 1999; Berry, 1995, 2002; Gummesson 1987, 1997, 2008a; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1991; Morgan & Hunt 1994; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Nykamp, 2001; Agariya & Singh, 2011; and others). Yet, for the readers convenience the research will briefly describe major trends within relationship marketing field.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) developed a commitment trust theory within relationship marketing field. In their research the authors identified relationship commitment and trust as two major constructs in facilitating successful relationship marketing effort by a firm (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 31). Ravald and Grönroos (1996) identified another important construct consumer perceived value in their research that shapes a long term customer relationship with the firm. Duncan and Moriarty (1999) have also addressed the issue of relationship communication in their article on relationship-marketing communication and its importance to the overall relationship marketing field (see also Lindberg-Repo, K., & Grönroos, 2004, pp. 230-232). In this article it has been also noted that “...the IMC concept was too narrow to deal with all of the company/stakeholder interactions” and “a broader version of IMC was needed,” while acknowledging the need for integrated communication with relationship marketing field (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, pp. 119-120).

the strategic, or core service of the firm, is built around satisfaction of the customer need enabling the firm to engage in a relationship building process with the customer (Berry, 2002, pp. 62-63). 

*Relationship customization* enables firm to engage in a customization and more targeted product offering in which new functionality or options can be added to an already existing service/product (Berry, 2002, pp. 63-65). *Service augmentation* relationship strategy “involves building ‘extras’ into the service to differentiate it from competitive offerings” (Berry, 2002, p. 65). *Relationship pricing* relationship strategy focuses on providing incentives for the customers who are willing to further integrate with a firm by purchasing additional services (Berry, 2002, pp. 66-67). *Internal marketing* relationship strategy involves the firm focusing on the internal workforce, primarily because in most cases the quality of products and services are determined by the attitudes and skills of the staff within the firm, ergo ensuring appropriate satisfaction levels via, in part marketing tools aimed within the company, an improved overall relationship with the customers can be achieved (Berry, 2002, pp. 66-67).

It is evident that the relationship marketing field covers a multitude of marketing related disciplines, yet the presentation of the concept and the theory is essential for the further discussion of the contribution of the theoretical concepts to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009).

### 3.1.4 Contribution of the IMC and relationship marketing

After the discussion of the theories behind IMC and relationship marketing, their theoretical relationship to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) can be established. Given the preceding review of concepts and based on previous academic research (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Grönroos, 2004) it is evident that IMC and relationship marketing are two related, but different concepts and often usage of IMC and relationship marketing as synonyms is not entirely correct (Grönroos, 2004, p. 102). Yet, the relationship communication model does combine the characteristics of the communication related issues common to both IMC and relationship marketing (Finne & Grönroos, 2009).

Specifically, from the IMC concept the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) takes the underlining factors related to the integration of the marketing messages and brings it closer within the field of relationship marketing by shifting the focus from the linear planned communication process, which is common under IMC conventional approach (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 181), to a more relationship based communication. This is achieved specifically by shifting focus to a more consumer-centric perspective, in which the integration of the communication messages by a firm occurs specifically on the consumer’s side (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 181). Both, the IMC and relationship marketing historically tended to prefer traditional approach in which the firm “drives the integration [of the communication process] and a consistent message is conveyed to the consumer” (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, pp. 179-180). By adopting consumer-centric perspective in a communication process under relationship communication perspective improved relationship with the customer can be achieved through the integration of *time* and *situational* dimensions particular to a specific customer (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 193).
The need for such a communication model combining the characteristics of the concepts related to the meaning creation, IMC and relationship marketing have been extensively discussed within relationship marketing literature (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; 1999; Grönroos, 2004 and others). The relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) addresses these concerns within the relationship marketing field, through the integration of time and situational dimensions, which are comprised of specific, defined factors and consumer-centric perspective on the communication process (Finne & Grönroos, 2009).

In light of the recent relationship communication developments (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), this research will focus on identifying whether the factors contributing to individual meaning creation have an actual, measurable impact on the perception of marketing action, and consequently if they should be considered and integrated in firm’s marketing communication. The research will now continue the discussion focusing on the history, developments and differences between the traditional and consumer generated media.

3.2 Traditional and Consumer Generated Media (CGM)

The traditional marketing communication media has been around for hundreds of years, while the CGM is a relatively new phenomenon pioneered after the digitalization period in recent years. There is a number of differences in terms of characteristics of media between the traditional media and CGM, which therefore may have different impact on meaning creation in terms of time and situational dimensions within the relationship communication model by Finne & Grönroos (2009). To effectively compare and outline major differences between the traditional media and CGM the research will now focus on theoretical background related to both media, and discuss the technical differences between the types of media.

3.2.1 Traditional marketing media

Under the traditional marketing communication perspective, the communication process appears in a linear fashion from the firm to the customers, ergo a one-to-many communication process (Stern, 1994, p. 5; Hoffman, & Novak, 1997, p. 44; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998, p. 2; Schmitt, 1999, p. 54). This perspective is based predominantly on traditional communication models by Lasswell (1948) and Shannon-Weaver mathematical model of communication (Shannon, 1948).

3.2.1.1 Background

Lasswell’s (1948) model of communication was based around the notion of “a speaker delivering a persuasive message to an audience” (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, p. 27), which is similar to the triadic dialogs pioneered by Aristotle (Stern, 1994, p. 5). The model consist of five variables [1] “Who” is the sender of the message, [2] “Says what” is the actual message being sent, [3] “In which channel” refers to a utilization of a specific media for the message transmission [4] “To whom” is the message receiver, and [5] “With what effects?” refers to the reaction of the message recipient to the message (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, pp. 26-27).
Shannon-Weaver mathematical communication transmission model (Shannon, 1948) utilizes a somewhat similar to Lasswell’s model (1948) linear communication approach. Yet, unlike Lasswell’s model Shannon-Weaver’s model utilizes “transmitters” or the media which encodes/decodes message from a sender to a recipient to explain the communication process (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, p. 27). Since the primary focus in Shannon-Weaver’s model was to explain the message transmission within TV/radio/telephone, the message was perceived as signal within the model and no effects of the message on the recipient’s meaning creation were considered within the model (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, pp. 27-28). More importantly though, the model introduced the concept of “noise” within the communication process, which refers to any object or individual that interferes with the message delivery process by altering the original message in any way (Shannon, 1948, p. 4; Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, p. 28). The graphic presentation of the Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model is depicted in figure 3.6.

![Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model](image)

Figure 3.6. Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model (Shannon, 1948, p. 4).

It is essential to point out that the receiver, within Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model, performs “reconstruction of the message from the signal,” while destination “is the person (or thing) for whom the message is intended” (Shannon, 1948, p. 4).

Lasswell’s model (1948) of communication and Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model (1948) considerably influenced the further developments within marketing communication field and consequently shaped the use of communication media.

A further development of these models was Schramm’s model of communication (1954). The model, like its predecessors was linear, but incorporated a feedback consideration, in which the recipient of the message had the possibility to clarify the initial message with the message sender (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, p. 29).

Berlo (1960, p. 72), building upon Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model (1948), proposed a further development of the linear communication model (See figure 2.7)
In Berlo’s communication model (1960) message is emphasized and although the feedback is not depicted it is assumed (Stone, Singletary, & Richmond, 1999, p. 30). Each part of the model, source, message, channel, receiver, has five characteristics that shape it (refer to figure 3.7).

These theories provided the fundamental background for the traditional hierarchical communication models within marketing field and accounted for one-to-many communication process relevant to the traditional advertising media, such as TV/radio/printed and similar media (Barry, 1987, p. 266). Based on these theories, advertising models, such as Model of Hierarchy of Effects, consisting of a linear six step process to purchase awareness, knowledge, liking, preference and conviction (Lavidge, & Steiner, 1961, p. 61), AIDA, consisting of a linear four step process to purchase attention, interest, desire and action (Robertson, 1968, p. 48) and similar models have been developed to be specifically utilized with traditional communication media.

3.2.1.2 Characteristics of traditional marketing media
Traditional marketing media “are predominantly push media where the marketing message is broadcasted from company to customer and other stakeholders. During this process, there is a limited interaction with the customer, although interaction is encouraged in some cases such as a direct-response campaign or mail-order campaign” (Chaffey, 2008, p. 31). Another underlining characteristic of traditional media is one-to-many communication in which the firm transmits a message via specific media channel to a large group of consumers (Hoffman, & Novak, 1997, p. 44). The communicated message is normally not personalized to the needs and/or specific characteristics of the targeted customer (Chaffey, 2008, p. 33) and the customers are treated as a homogenous group (Hoffman, & Novak, 1997, p. 44). The medium through which the information is being delivered is considered to be a technical mean, or a pipe, for message delivery (Hoffman, & Novak, 1997, p. 44).
Given these characteristics and theoretical background on traditional media, advertising via TV/radio/printed publications/mail-order and similar marketing tools are considered to be traditional marketing media (Chaffey, 2008, p. 32).

3.2.2 Consumer Generated Media (CGM)

CGM is a relatively new phenomenon within marketing field and is part of the new media (Chaffey, 2008, p. 31), sometimes also referred to as digital or non-traditional media (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 731). To objectively evaluate the theoretical background of the CGM the new or non-traditional media have to be considered. Therefore, theoretical background on CGM will include a broader overview of the theoretical research with new media, as well as latest academic research on GCM.

3.2.2.1 Background

The first researches within academic field in regard of new types of media originated with the introduction of the concept of *interactivity* within marketing field (Grönroos, 1982, pp. 32-33; Webster, 1992, p. 13; Hoffman & Novak, 1996, p. 50). The concept of *interactivity* came from the realization that the communication process between the firm and the customer is not a linear process and does not occur in vacuum (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, p. 119). Duncan and Moriarty (1998, p. 8) defined *interactivity* as “a hallmark of the paradigm shift in both marketing and communication.” At the same time the developments in the information technology (refer to section 3.1.3) enabled firms and customers to engage in many-to-many mediated communication process (Hoffman & Novak, 1996, p. 53; Hoffman & Novak, 1997, p. 44).

In a many-to-many communication model the interaction between the customer and the firm is not linear and can be conducted both ways (Hoffman & Novak, 1997, p. 44). The key characteristics of the conceptual model can be summarized as follows:

“[1] consumers can interact with the medium and with each other, [2] firms can provide content to the medium and interact with each other, [3] firms and consumers can interact, and, in the most radical departure from traditional marketing environments, [4] consumers can provide commercially oriented content to the medium” (Hoffman & Novak, 1997, p. 44).

The graphic representation of the model is available in figure 3.8.
Recent developments within many-to-many marketing theory is focused around network perspective on the communication process in which marketing and communication is viewed as a multi-party approach, which integrates not only firm and customer, but also third party stakeholders and considers other business functions, not necessarily related to marketing or communication (Gummersson, 2008b, p. 16).

### 3.2.2.2 Characteristics of new media

One of the defining characteristics of new media is its ability to reach a specific group of people in a targeted and cost efficient manner (Kotler et al., 2009, p. 731). Therefore the characteristics of the new media are as follows: [1] the customer is capable to initiate contact with the firm, [2] and to search for content, or information on their own, [3] the experience is predominantly individual through the communication medium, [4] the information of the customer, or his/her actions can be processed and stored for the later interaction by the firm, therefore reliance on integration and database management by the firm is assumed, [5] the information can be customized to fit the specific characteristics of the customer (Deighton, 1996, p. 152).

Given these characteristics of new media, interactive online ads, e-mail communication, corporate and private websites, mobile marketing platforms, and similar technologies are all parts of new media. It is also worthy to note, that a company may utilize a new media channel in a traditional way, without necessary taking advantage of the characteristics or considering individual experience of the customer with the media. For instance, an e-mail message can be sent out to all of the customers of the company and no further action in terms of tracking, storage of the communication, or engagement in an additional communication by the firm can be chosen to be performed by the firm. In
this case the e-mail marketing communication channel would resemble traditional media characteristics.

### 3.2.2.3 Characteristics of CGM

CGM is part of new media communication technologies, sometimes referred to as *social media* (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 357). There has only been limited research about the consumer generated media (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008; Mangold, & Faulds, 2009; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Schaedel & Clement, 2010; Blackshaw, 2011). Due to relative recent emergence of the concept within academic field there is no single definition of the concept (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007, p. 4). Terms like *consumer generated media* (Blackshaw, 2011, p. 108), *user-created content* (Wunsch-Vincent & Vickery, 2007, p. 4), *user-generated content* (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 216) and similar variations are present and often used interchangeably within academic literature.

There is however an emerging classification of the CGM and a list of characteristics that define the CGM. Daugherty, Eastin, and Bright (2008, pp. 19-20) define CGM as:

“…media content that is created or produced by the general public rather than by paid professionals and is primarily distributed on the Internet. This includes such online content as digital video, blogging, podcasting, mobile phone photography, wikis, and user-forum posts, among others.”

Other researchers comply with this definition, citing similar characteristics of the media, having a non-profit customer’s creation of the content and viral distribution over digital networks (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 358; Schaedel & Clement, 2010, pp. 18-20). To make this point explicitly clear consider the following example, if a firm is posting a certain marketing message over a media channel, such as Facebook or Twitter social networks, this content can be commented/replied/shared by the recipients, customers and other stakeholders. These actions of commenting, sharing, discussing and replying constitutes the creation of new content, which is publicly available, not-for-profit, and is distributed via the Internet complying with the above definition of CGM. Therefore communication media, which enable this type of content creation and sharing, can be considered to be CGM.

Mangold and Faulds (2009, p. 358) suggested the following examples of CGM: [1] social networking cites, such as Facebook and My Space, [2] creativity works sharing cites, which can be further divided into video, photo, music, content and general intellectual property sharing websites, such as YouTube, Flickr, Spotify and others, [3] user sponsored websites/blogs, such as Mashable, [4] company sponsored website blogs, such as Idea Storm by Dell, [5] company-sponsored cause/help sites, such as DataLiberation by Google [6] invitation-only social networks, such as A Small World social network [7] business networking sites, such as LinkedIn, [8] collaborative websites, such as Wikipedia, [9] virtual worlds, such as Second Life, [10] commerce communities, such as Amazon, [11] podcasts, [12] news delivery sites, such as BBC, [13] educational materials sharing, such MIT, [14] open source software communities, such as Mozilla, [15] Social bookmarking sites allowing users to recommend online news stories, music, videos, etc, such as Reddit.
The CGM is part of new media, and primarily focused around the Internet. The CGM has distinctive characteristics which set it apart from the traditional media, as the discussion above suggests.

### 3.2.3 Perception of trustworthiness and emotional appeal of marketing media

The perception of marketing messages, communication, and communication channels has been a subject of number of different researches (Ohanian, 1990; Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Feltham, 1994). While there were indeed different types of researches in this field of marketing, there was no single set of variables in terms of perception against which a marketing action was measured. Different researchers tend to utilize different variables based on the specific research objectives.

Ohanian, (1990), in the research on the perception of ad’s believability/credibility utilized three distinct constructs of attractiveness, trustworthiness and expertise to measure the perception of an ad which utilized celebrity endorsers. Beltramini and Kenneth (1985) were focusing specifically on measuring the perception of TV advertising in terms of believability/trustworthiness. Pollay and Mittal (1993) were focusing on the measurement of consumers’ perception of product and social information, hedonic amusement, economic value, fostering materialism, corrupting value, and falsity/non-sense. Feltham (1994) utilized concepts of ethos, which referred to persuasive appeal of the source of a message, logos, which essentially measured information about the concept presented in the marketing message, and pathos, which related to the emotional or affective appeal of an ad to the consumer.

In addition, given the previously discussed relationship marketing theoretical developments (refer to section 3.1.3.3) and specifically Morgan and Hunt study (1994, p. 31) citing trust as one of the major constructs in facilitating the relationship between the firm and the customer, and the acknowledgement of the IMC theory adopting relationship marketing characteristics (Duncan & Moriarty, 1999, pp. 119-120) the choice to have trustworthiness measure of a marketing action has been finalized. The measure of trust/believability of a marketing action appears in majority of the researches on the subject (Ohanian, 1990; Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985; Pollay & Mittal, 1993; Feltham, 1994).

Similarly to trustworthiness measure, the measure of emotional appeal of marketing action and information measure has been widely utilized in previous researches (Ohanian, 1990; Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985; Feltham, 1994). However, only the measure of emotional appeal has been incorporated within current research to answer the specific research questions. The reasons why information measure has not been included in current study is discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.2.

This concludes the literature review of the concepts and theories utilized within current research and enable discussion of theoretical point of departure for the study.

### 3.3 Theoretical point of departure

The relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, refer to figure 3.2), which has been chosen as the underlining theoretical framework for the research,
provides only partial view on the communication process between the customer and the firm because the model does not take into account message delivery via various media channels. The contribution of IMC and relationship marketing is not explicitly clear within the model as well.

Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 184) openly argue that “the consumer alone creates the meaning of all actions taken by the marketer.” Yet, the original relationship communication model does not fully reflect this perspective because the message and media channels are not present within the framework of the model. For the purposes of the research the integration of the message developed by the firm and media channels, specifically traditional media and CGM, and their interplay with the other relationship communication factors contributing to the meaning creation process is required. Figure 3.9a represents the adjusted relationship communication model, which includes message and media communication channels.

Figure 3.9a. The relationship communication model with message and media.

Figure 3.9a adds three more factors that contribute to the meaning creation by the consumer, specifically the marketing message itself, and the choice of media by the marketing manager that influence the meaning creation process. Note that the message and the choice of media to be utilized to deliver the marketing message comprise IMC, which also includes feedback process taken from earlier communication models (see Schramm’s model of communication, 1954). It is also worthy of noting that both the message and the media channels, at least initially, are selected and to some extend controlled by the firm. Under the relationship communication perspective the IMC should also account for individual unique factors that shape consumer’s meaning creation process, should the relationship between these factors have a significant impact on consumer’s perception of firm’s marketing action.
Note the difference between the communication using traditional media with one of its defining characteristics of one way communication, in which the firm develops a message and sends it in a linear fashion to the recipient with limited possibility to receive feedback, and the CGM in which communication is possible both (or more) ways almost instantly.

Still, figure 3.9a is a simplified model of relationship communication, because it does not fully depict the relationship between all of the factors that contribute to the meaning creation process. According to Finne and Grönroos (2009, pp. 184-185) a combination of factors influence meaning creation process by the consumer, and these factors combined comprise the meaning creation process. Figure 3.9b represents the interplay between the factors influencing meaning creation process.

Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 185) suggest that “the effect of an ad cannot be analyzed without taking the context into account,” meaning that the meaning creation derived from the ad is subjective to particular factors that influence message recipient. Even more importantly, Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 185) go on to saying that some messages created by the firm may be interpreted at their face value, while other messages and marketing communication may be influenced by one or more factors described within the relationship communication framework.
Note that the firm, marketing message and communication media are portrayed in figure 3.9b. This is done to explicitly depict all of the factors that may influence meaning creation process in the relationship communication settings.

The interrelatedness of these factors and the relationship communication framework does not take into account the differences between the traditional and CGM communication media, which were discussed earlier and introduced within the relationship communication framework in figures 3.9a and 3.9b, which are used to transmit specific message to the customer. Given the differences between the traditional and CGM communication channels the integration of the factors within relationship communication framework may vary even when the basic marketing message remains the same. In other words, if the firm uses the same basic message within its marketing activities but utilizes different communication channels, the integration of the relationship communication factors within meaning creation process by the recipient of the message may vary depending on specific communication media.
Chapter 4. Empirical method
For the current research, the ability to gain access to an actual business utilizing both traditional and consumer generated media and its customers was a high priority for the researchers. Technically, any business utilizing the said marketing media and having a certain amount of customers would potentially be feasible for the research.

The researchers opted to conduct the study within fitness and recreational settings because according to International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association and despite recent economic downturns the industry was steadily growing adding more than 10 million new members in 2009 alone (cited in K. O., 2010, p. 68). According to recent Sports Equipment Industry report (2012, p. 2) the global market is projected to grow by 12.2% throughout 2016. Within fitness and recreational industry firms often tend to utilize various communication media in their daily marketing activities making this setting highly relevant in light of current research questions.

The selected fitness and recreational setting is relevant from both academic and practical standpoints. It not only enables the researchers to conduct a study with actual customers of the business, but also investigate the given research questions within the environment that is highly dependent on effective utilization of marketing media. With the globally intensifying competition within industry the incumbents may benefit from understanding of how the customers perceive different communication media, and whether the factors contributing to individual meaning creation should be considered and incorporated within marketing communication strategy by the firm.

4.1 Research settings
IKSU fitness center (IKSU, 2012) located in Umeå, North of Sweden has been selected to be the settings for the current research. The choice to conduct the research on IKSU facilities was motivated by several factors. First, IKSU fitness center is one of the largest fitness and group training oriented facilities in the world. Second, the center covers a wide array of individual and team sports, providing professional facilities and equipment for both indoor and outdoor team sports, individual fitness exercises, and multiple recreational and health care services, which in essence serves as a reliable proxy for smaller fitness and recreational facilities with more specialized focused in North of Sweden. Third, the fitness center utilizes both traditional and consumer generated media on daily basis, and lastly, would enable the researchers to actually enroll a sufficient number of respondents fitting the quantitative research design parameters. Based on these selection criteria, the researchers strongly believe that the selected settings for the current study can be generalized specifically to majority of fitness and recreational facilities operating in North of Sweden.

Andreas Christiansen, marketing manager at IKSU, has been contacted by the researchers to acquire additional information about the marketing effort and the customers of the company. Upon conducting an interview with IKSU marketing manager the researchers confirmed that the company actively utilizes both traditional media, specifically printed media (Visit Umeå, Västerbottens Kurinen, and Västerbottens Folkblad local newspapers), outdoor advertising (billboards, and ad shells) and others, along with consumer generated media, specifically the fitness center uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, MyNewsDesk, and blogs on corporate website, to
attract, engage and build relationship with the potential and current members of the club. This type of actual business environment fitted current research superbly well.

The researchers obtained more information on the typical fitness center member, so that the actual sample of respondents during the data collection process could be compared against the entire population of the fitness center members. In the interview, Andreas Christiansen described typical IKSU member as being a female of 27-29 years old, with a goal to socialize with friends at IKSU and to get fit. As of March 2012, the fitness center had over 17,000 members; the split between the female and male customers is presented in figure 4.1.

![Figure 4.1. IKSU Members male/female split](image)

For the purposes of the research an actual marketing example of the message utilized by IKSU in their marketing effort has been obtained from the fitness center. The marketing message utilized within the research is presented in figure 4.2.

![Figure 4.2. IKSU marketing message utilized within the research. English translation: “Test training guide at iksu.se. Win time with personal trainer.”](image)

The researchers initially considered development of their own example of marketing message for the use in the research, but after initial testing and access to real marketing materials utilized by the fitness club in the late 2011 and early 2012 marketing campaign, the choice has been made to use an actual marketing message in the research. This choice was deemed to improve the external validity of the results. For the
customers already familiar with the marketing message, the survey completion process would be more straightforward and convenient as well.

4.2 Participants and data collection

The participants for the study were actual IKSU customers (members of the fitness center). The data collection process was conducted directly on the premises of IKSU facilities.

Simple random sampling technique was utilized during the empirical data collection process for the current research. The primary motivation for the use of simple random sampling technique in the research resulted from the quantitative methodological approach and known characteristics of general population within fitness center. In terms of sampling techniques in general, simple random sampling is one of the fairest techniques for quantitative data collection, because every member of general population, given that she or he is present at the time of data collection, has an equal chance of being selected for the participation in the research (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 228). This approach would contribute to improved external validity of the research.

4.2.1 Sampling procedures

The utilization of simple random sampling technique required the researchers to obtain an adequate sample size for the study so that the results could be statistically well supported. There were several factors considered in the sample size calculation, including [1] current research questions, [2] population size and demographic characteristics, [3] reliance on statistical calculations in terms of error levels and confidence levels, and [4] time allocated to the data collection process.

The research questions required the respondents to provide their feedback in terms of factors that impact meaning creation in relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and evaluate the examples of marketing action provided by the researchers in the actual survey. Both parts of the survey were focused around single fitness and recreational settings, making the discussed issues narrow and homogeneous. The general characteristics of the population in terms of size and demographics were known to the researchers and constituted a relatively homogeneous group in terms of age, gender split, and motivation for training. From a purely statistical point of view for heterogeneous population of 17,277, error level and confidence levels set at 10% and 95% respectfully the researchers would have to collect 96 unique responses, whereas for error level and confidence levels set at 5% and 95% respectfully the researchers would have to collect 376 unique responses. The time allocated for data collection was set at 7 days maximum. The amount of time for the completion of the survey has been determined in preliminary testing and was approximately 10 minutes per single respondent. After the consideration of all these factors, the sample size was determined to be set at 200 unique responses.

Once the sample size has been determined the researchers had to ensure that every member of general population had an equal chance of being selected for the participation in the data collection process effectively complying with the chosen simple random sampling technique. Two major considerations in terms of location and time for the data collection have been evaluated.
The empirical data collection was conducted directly on the premises of the fitness center. The layout of the location proved to be very favorable for the researchers because while the fitness center does indeed have several entrances for the members, the entrances lead to a single lobby, meaning that every member of the fitness center that comes in for the fitness training or any other recreational activities can be intercepted at a single location. The schematic of the location for the data collection process is presented in figure 4.3.

![Figure 4.3. Location of empirical data collection.](image)

At the physical location of data collection, the area for survey completion has been allocated for the participants of the study. This location for the data collection enabled the researchers to meet every member of the fitness club coming or leaving the fitness center, technically allowing equal chance to be enrolled in the study for every member.

The time consideration for data collection process had to reflect the chosen sampling method as well. Table 4.4 presents the summary of the times on daily basis for the data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Opening hours</th>
<th>Data collection hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, April 14th</td>
<td>08:00-19:00</td>
<td>08:00-16:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, April 15th</td>
<td>08:00-23:00</td>
<td>14:00-22:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, April 16th</td>
<td>06:00-23:00</td>
<td>09:00-17:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, April 17th</td>
<td>06:00-23:00</td>
<td>13:00-21:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, April 18th</td>
<td>06:00-23:00</td>
<td>14:00-22:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 19th</td>
<td>06:00-23:00</td>
<td>15:00-23:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4. Times for empirical data collection.
The data collection process took 6 days, which included both weekdays and weekends and multiple times covering morning, daytime, and evening hours of the fitness center operation. 8 hours per day was allocated to the data collection process. This approach ensured that every member of the general population had an equal chance of being selected to participate in the study disregarding his or her preference in terms of individual training times.

To ensure representativeness of the sample given population characteristics in terms of gender split the researchers aimed to enroll relatively similar number of males and females in the empirical data collection to ensure representativeness of the general population. Otherwise, the respondents for the data collection process would be chosen randomly.

The second part of the survey focused on the evaluation of marketing message delivered via traditional and consumer generated media (refer to section 4.3). The researchers did not require any prior knowledge or usage experience with the said media by the respondents. This was possible because the researchers have prepared actual examples of the marketing media. First, every respondent obtained a printed example of an actual marketing message delivered via specific marketing media. Second, if a printed example was not sufficient specifically in case of consumer generated media, every respondent had access via researcher’s computer to the same marketing message and communication media in real time.

It is worthy of noting however, that during morning and daytime hours every other member of the fitness center was asked to take part in the research, while in the evening hours every tenth member of the fitness center present at the time of data collection on the premises was asked to fill out the survey, primarily because the amount of members of the fitness center during evening hours vastly exceeded number of members during morning and daytime hours. The amount of responders that the researchers managed to stop and enroll in data collection is estimated to be 20%, meaning that roughly every fifth person who was asked to participate in the study agreed to be enrolled. This means that the researchers managed to approach over 1,000 actual members of the fitness center. The willingness to participate in the research, however varied based on the specific times of data collection. During morning hours the number of members on the premises of fitness center was significantly lower, and people who came in during these hours (08:00-10:00) generally declined to participate, however the researchers still managed to acquire data during these hours. General unwillingness to participate in data collection during morning hours can be predominantly motivated by the respondents’ lack of time, which has been often cited by the participants. During later hours in the day, the consistency and willingness to take part in the survey has been more stable, and willingness to take part in the survey improved. This pattern in respondents’ participation represents the actual fitness and recreational patterns related to attendance of health and fitness clubs globally (Shen, 2008, p. 44).

4.3 Survey design

The actual survey consisted of two parts. The first part of the survey captured basic demographic information from a respondent (gender, age and time spent training on weekly basis), which was used to assess the representativeness of the obtained sample
against general population, but primarily focused on measuring the factors that influence meaning creation process by the consumer as described in relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). These included factors associated with *time* and *situational* dimensions of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). All of the previous researches in this field utilized variation of interviews to identify factors influencing meaning creation process by the consumer (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000). This research, though, was not concerned about identifying factors that influence meaning creation, but focused primarily on whether these factors impact the perception of communication media channels. Therefore the factors influencing meaning creation within the relationship communication framework were incorporated within the first part of the survey. Marketing scales with proven reliability were utilized in survey development process. This approach improved internal validity of the survey development. It is worthy of noting that while, all of the factors presented within the relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) have not been measured together in previous researches in a quantitative study design, separate factors have been measured in previous researches. The constructs developed within previous researches to measure these factors were accordingly adjusted and incorporated within the current survey design.

The second part of the survey was focused on measuring perception of a marketing message given specific communication media. The actual marketing message (see figure 4.2) remained unaltered while the communication media was changed. The same marketing scales based on previous proven constructs were utilized to quantify the data. The utilization of message along with a communication channel is essential, because measuring a communication media (traditional or consumer generated) at its face value cannot be related explicitly to the first part of the survey. In other words comparing, Facebook marketing communication by a firm with newspaper ad by the same or different firm is not specific in regard to the chosen settings for the research.

4.3.1 Variables

The variables utilized within this research and the scales used to measure them have all been adapted from previous research with proven reliability record.

4.3.1.1 Independent variables

The variables presented in the first part of the survey (refer to Appendix I) comprise independent variables and were based on the factors outlined in a relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). As previously mentioned there are total of four factors two contributing to *time* dimension of the model and two contributing to the *situational* dimension of the model that shape meaning creation, yet Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 183) also outlined *general perception of the relationship with the firm* stating that it relates to the time dimension. Consequently the researchers added a set of questions to capture this factor, as a matter of precaution in case historic or future variables will not pass reliability test. It can be argued that *general perception of the relationship with the firm* is actually a separate factor, yet since this is outside of the scope of current research, this particular issue can be investigated in the future research within relationship communication field. Consequently there were total of five variables related to individual consumer experiences and perceptions of the company

The time dimension (comprising of historic and future factors, and related directly to the fitness center) of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) has been captured in the following scales (refer to Appendix I for an actual survey):

1. **Historic factors.** *Past experience with IKSU sports and fitness* variable was comprised of the three questions asking the respondent to rate their past experiences in the fitness club based on seven-point likert-type scale. The original scales were developed for measuring satisfaction with experience by Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002a, 2002b, 2003). The scales have been used in several studies specifically testing satisfaction with experience of bank customers in the first study (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002a), measuring satisfaction with experience of new home buyers in the second study (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002b), and measuring satisfaction with experience with electronics dealer in the third study (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2003). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .89, .88 and .82 respectively for these scales has been achieved within these researches. Specifically in these researches (Maxham III & Netemeyer, 2002a; 2002b; 2003), several tests of convergent and discriminant validity have been executed proving the reliability of the scales.

2. **Future factors.** *Future fitness and sports related expectations* variable was comprised of the three questions asking a respondent to rate their future enjoyment expectation related to sports and fitness activities in the fitness center on ten-point likert-type scale. This was one of the more challenging scales to put together because relatively few studies have been conducted measuring the future related expectations of an activity of any type. Never the less the scales within the survey were based on the expected enjoyment an individual anticipates with respect to a future activity developed by Miller, Kahn and Luce (2008). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .92 for these scales has been reported (Miller, Kahn & Luce, 2008). The scale’s validity has not been explicitly discussed within the research (Miller, Kahn & Luce, 2008).

The situational dimension (comprising of internal and external factors related to individual consumer perception) of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) has been captured in the following questions (refer to Appendix I for an actual survey):

1. **Internal factors.** *Personal attitude towards sports and fitness* variable was comprised of the six questions asking the respondent to rate their awareness of their personal fitness based on five-point likert-type statements. The scale for the research has been adapted from the health consciousness scale which consisted of the similar five-point likert-type statements and nine questions measuring individual’s health consciousness (Gould, 1988, cited in Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999, pp. 132-133). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .93 for these scales has been reported (Gould, 1988, cited in Bearden and...
Netemeyer, 1999, p. 132). Confirmatory factor analysis established the validity of the scale (Gould, 1988, cited in Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999, p. 132). The original health consciousness scale had to be adjusted to fit the specific objectives of the research, because after the initial testing of these scales in terms of fitness consciousness the feedback received from the testing respondents indicated that some of the question are not related to the personal attitude towards sports and fitness and create confusion for the respondents. Upon the evaluation of the feedback the questions have been shortened from nine to six and reworked to ensure clear understanding by respondents.

2. External factors. **Awareness of general trends within sports industry and competitive services** variable was comprised of the four questions asking the respondent to rate their awareness of the general trends within sports and fitness industry and competitive services on seven-point likert-type scale. The scales were partially based on product interest prior to ad exposure scale (Agee & Brett, 2001), though 4.3 and 4.4 (refer to Appendix I) questions were added to reflect the trends related to the external factors of relationship communication model. The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .63 for the original scales has been reported (Agee & Brett, 2001). The scale's validity examination has not been discussed by Agee and Brett (2001). Again these particular scales for the current research had to be adjusted to reflect the specific characteristics related to external factors and relatively low reported reliability measure.

In addition to the factors contributing to the meaning creation identified within the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) another variable measuring the overall perception of the relationship with the fitness center has been added to survey design:

**Perception of the relationship with fitness center** variable was comprised of the six questions asking the respondent to rate their overall experience with fitness center on seven-point likert-type scale. The scales adjusted from the original scales measuring attitude towards health club were utilized in the survey design (Raghubir & Corfman, 1999). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .91 for the original scales has been reported (Raghubir & Corfman, 1999).

The first part of the survey (refer to Appendix I) enabled the researchers to evaluate the factors that influence meaning creation process on individual level within sports and fitness settings.

4.3.1.2 **Dependent variables**

The second part of the survey required the respondents to evaluate the same marketing message within different communication media, specifically two sets of questions prompted the respondent to evaluate the same message delivered via traditional (refer to Appendix I, survey part 2 questions 1 and 3) and two sets of questions delivered via consumer generated media (refer to Appendix I, survey part 2 questions 2 and 4). The evaluation criteria for the perception of the ad and the media channel were based on the constructs of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal*. The scales were derived from several researches that evaluated ads utilizing similar criteria (Ohanian, 1990; Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985; Feltham, 1994).
1. **Trustworthiness** construct was comprised of the three questions asking the respondent to rate their perception of the message and the marketing channel on a ten-point likert-type scale. Similar measuring scales were used in celebrity endorsement trustworthiness research (Ohanian, 1990), TV advertising believability scale (Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985) and viewer judgment of ads research (Feltham, 1994). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .89, .95 and .78 for the original scales has been reported respectively. High internal validity was reported in all of the three researches.

2. **Emotional appeal** construct was comprised of the four questions asking the respondent to rate the emotional appeal of the message and the marketing channel on a ten-point likert-type scale. Similar measuring scales were used in viewer judgment of ads research (Feltham, 1994). The coefficient of reliability (Cronbach's alpha) of .79 has been reported (Feltham, 1994). The average reliability estimates for emotional appeal construct of .89 has been reported (Feltham, 1994).

Another construct of **information measure** of an ad and media channel has been considered to be included within the research. After, initial testing of the information measure construct it became apparent that evaluating communication media given identical message is confusing and not always logically possible. Therefore, focus towards trustworthiness and emotional appeal constructs of a marketing action has been predominant in the research.

### 4.3.1.3 Control variable
The marketing message itself, presented in the second part of the survey (refer to figure 4.2 and Appendix I), remained unchanged. The responders were presented with an actual example of the marketing message and media type, along with the description of the marketing message and the media, which effectively comprised a control variable in current study.

### 4.3.2 Survey layout
Survey layout with constructs and question is depicted in figure 4.5. Total of 20 questions related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) comprised the first part of the survey. The second part of the survey consisted of 4 questions, with seven ten-point scale each related to the perception of the message and the media in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal. In questions 1 and 3, in the second part of the survey, traditional communication media was utilized, in questions 2 and 4 – consumer generated media.
The confidentiality of the participants of the research was ensured by the researchers. Collected data was and will not be disclosed to the parties not related to the current research. Upon conversion of the collected data into digital format, the original paper
based responses were destroyed assuring that the participants of the study cannot be identified, thereby ensuring anonymity of the participants.

All of the participants of the research received information about who and why is conducting current research. Should the respondent wanted to withdraw from participation in the current study for any reason he or she could do so at any given time.
Chapter 5. Empirical analysis
A total of 213 responses were collected, out of which 12 forms were not completely filled out, leaving 201 actual fully completed surveys for the data analysis, which was consistent with the objectives of the research. Once the paper based responses where collected the data was converted into digital format for the data analysis purposes.

5.1 Demographic analysis
Out of 201 total responses, male participants accounted for 58.2% of total responses while the female participants accounted for 41.8% (refer to table 5.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Survey participation

In terms of the actual distribution of the fitness center members (refer to section 4.1) the number of female members exceeds the number of male participants, yet according to the data collected within the survey, male participants spend more time at the fitness center, then the females (refer to table 5.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time training variable</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>2.557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>3.250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. Hours spent training on weekly basis

The difference between male and female response rates within the actual survey in comparison to the population can be attributed to the male participants actually spending more time at the fitness center then the females. In terms of age, the participants of the survey ranged from 16 to 47 year olds, and the mean age for both female and male participants was very close (refer to table 5.3).
### Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid</th>
<th>Missing</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24.35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24.58</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3. Age distribution of the participants

The age differences based on gender are presented in figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4. Age based on gender.

The age of respondents on average is a little younger than the age of the typical targeted fitness center member, cited by marketing manager at IKSU (refer to section 4.1), yet the difference is marginal and can be attributed to the fact that during fall and spring semesters (the data collection was conducted during the spring semester) students enrolled in various programs at Umeå University attend fitness center, which explains the slightly younger age of the respondents within current research.

The sample obtained during the course of data collection is representative of the population and fits current research. The validity and reliability measures of the variables in the current research will now be evaluated, before the statistical analysis of the relationships within the survey can be conducted.

### 5.2 Statistical reliability measures

The measurement of the scales reliability based on Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was used as primary reliability measure for the scales utilized within the survey. Cronback’s alpha coefficient with value above or equal to .7 constitutes a reliable scale within the framework of current research.
Historic factors related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) were originally based on the Maxham III and Netemeyer researches (2002a, 2002b, 2003), yet within the current research the reliability measure significantly differed from the sighted within these researches values of .89, .88 and .82 respectively. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for questions measuring historic factors within current research was only .539, which is not reliable enough for the purposes of the current research. The difference between the calculated Cronbach’s alpha values within Maxham III and Netemeyer researches (2002a, 2002b, 2003) and current research may be due to the differences in the actual settings utilized in the researches. Never the less, the researchers have anticipated a possibility of reliability issues with various scales utilized within the research, and added additional variables, such as, in this particular case, perception of the relationship with the firm that are closely related to time dimension of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), and should the reliability measures be insufficient for a single or set of variables, alternatives can be utilized, given adequate reliability measure.

Future factors related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) were originally based on the scales developed in Miller, Kahn and Luce’s research (2008). The cited Cronbach’s alpha coefficient within their research was .92; within current research Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .847 for the three question seven-point scale, confirming reliability of the measurement.

Internal factors related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) were originally based on the scales developed in Gould’s research (1988, cited in Bearden and Netemeyer, 1999, pp. 132-133). The cited Cronbach’s alpha coefficient within the original research was .93; within current research Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .846 for the six question five-point scale, confirming reliability of the measurement.

External factors related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) were originally based on the scales developed in Agee and Brett’s research (2001). The cited Cronbach’s alpha coefficient within the original research was .63; within current research Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .73 for the four question seven-point scale, confirming reliability of the measurement. While the initial scales were not reliable the researchers have made adequate adjustments within survey design, which consequently improved the reliability measure.

Perception of the relationship with the firm was mentioned as one of the contributing factors to meaning creation in the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), closely related to the time and specifically historic factors. The questions measuring the perception of the relationship with the firm were originally based on the scales developed in Raghubir and Corfman’s research (1999). Cronbach’s alpha coefficient within the original research was .91; within current research Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was .842 for the six question seven-point scale, confirming reliability of the measurement.

For the second part of the survey the perception of the message and the ads was evaluated in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal. There were total of four questions, two related to traditional and two to the consumer generated media.
Consequently, four *trustworthiness* and four *emotional appeal* reliability measures had to be computed, to check the reliability of the results. The *trustworthiness* scales were based on the previous researches (Ohanian, 1990; Beltramini & Kenneth, 1985; Feltham, 1994) that cited Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .89, .95 and .78 respectively.

*Trustworthiness* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for traditional media [1] (part 2 question 1) was .807, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Trustworthiness* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for consumer generated media [1] (part 2 question 2) was .871, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Trustworthiness* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for traditional media [2] (part 2 question 3) was .857, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Trustworthiness* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for consumer generated media [2] (part 2 question 4) was .9, confirming reliability of the measurement.

*Emotional appeal* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for traditional media [1] (part 2 question 1) was .908, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Emotional appeal* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for consumer generated media [1] (part 2 question 2) was .93, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Emotional appeal* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for traditional media [2] (part 2 question 3) was .937, confirming reliability of the measurement. *Emotional appeal* Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for consumer generated media [2] (part 2 question 4) was .949, confirming reliability of the measurement.

The summary of the reliability measures for the current research is presented in table 5.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cronbach's alpha coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors</td>
<td>0.539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors</td>
<td>0.847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors</td>
<td>0.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors</td>
<td>0.730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception of the relationship</td>
<td>0.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media trust [1]</td>
<td>0.807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media emotional appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM emotional appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media trust [2]</td>
<td>0.857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media emotional appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM emotional appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5. Reliability measures summary.
Table 5.5 indicates that constructs and scales utilized in the survey design are reliable and therefore can be utilized in further statistical data analysis within the research. The only variable with the relatively low Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was related to historic factors measurement of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Yet, additional measurement of the perception of the relationship with the firm, which was consciously added to the survey design in case historic or future factors measurement scales turn out to be unreliable, can be utilized instead of historic factors. The perception of the relationship with the firm is largely based on experiences by the customers and historic interactions. This is clearly acknowledged by the developers of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 183) and the question design itself is focused around evaluating the experience of the fitness center customers with the firm, which is a historic construct. It is worthy of noting that if future factors turned out to be statistically unreliable, the perception of the relationship with the firm given questions utilized within current survey could not be adequately substituted for future factors.

5.3 Statistical evaluation of perception of traditional and consumer generated media

The evaluation of traditional and consumer generated media has been conducted by asking the respondents to evaluate the same marketing message presented in different communication channels (refer to Appendix I, part 2 of the survey). The perception of the message and the communication media has been measured in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal. Eight new variables have been computed within Predictive Analytics Software (PASW), measuring trustworthiness and emotional appeal of the traditional and consumer generated media to analyze the differences in the consumer perception. Paired samples T tests have been executed on the variables to evaluate the differences in means between the said media. The results of the T tests are presented in the table 5.6.
Table 5.6. Perception evaluation of traditional and consumer generated media in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal.

The observed mean difference and t values for pairs 1-5 and 7 given p values less than alpha, which is set at .05, indicate that there is indeed a statistically significant difference in perception of the traditional and consumer generated media in terms of perception of trustworthiness in all instances and in terms of perception of emotional appeal in 50% of instances within current research. Curiously, in pair 6, where perception of the emotional appeal of newspaper ad was evaluated against emotional appeal of Twitter message the mean difference was minimal (.184), suggesting very similar perception of the two media in terms of emotional appeal in that particular case. Similarly in pair 8, which measured emotional appeal of indoor TV ad and Facebook message, the mean difference was bigger (.791) than in pair 6, yet not enough to signify statistical difference with p value of .13. Additionally the information on paired samples correlations is available in Appendix II, which measures the correlations between the said pairs of tested variables.
The difference in perception between traditional and consumer generated media in terms of *trustworthiness* and partially (in 50% of instances) in terms of *emotional appeal* can now be correlated to the factors identified within the first part of the survey, namely factors related to the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009).

### 5.4 Statistical analysis of the relationship communication factors

To evaluate the correlation between the *historic, future, internal* and *external* factors identified within the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and perception of the message and the communication media, in terms of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal*, linear regression was utilized with coefficient of variation (R square) as a primary measure of the model fit. Coefficient *alpha* was set to .05. First, the factors contributing to individual meaning creation were collectively analyzed in terms of perception of marketing action. Second, each individual factor was collectively analyzed in terms of perception of marketing action.

#### 5.4.1 Statistical analysis of the combined impact of the relationship communication factors on perception of the marketing action

Table 5.7 represents the summary of the results after regression analysis of the four relationship communication factors combined on the perception of the marketing action in terms of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R square value for 4 factors of RC model</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media trust [1]</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.074</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media trust [2]</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional media emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.070</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7. *Trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal* in traditional and consumer generated media explained by the factors identified within relationship communication model.

All of the four factors identified in the relationship communication framework (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) have been used within the regression analysis together to identify correlations, between the marketing message and the perception of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal* of the ads utilizing traditional and consumer generated media and these factors.
5.4.2 Statistical analysis of the separate impact of the relationship communication factors on perception of the marketing action

Table 5.8 represents the summary of the results of the regression analysis of the four factors that impact consumer meaning creation separately on the perception of marketing action in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor Evaluation</th>
<th>R square value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of TM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.163</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of TM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.088</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of TM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of TM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of TM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.040</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of TM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of TM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of TM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of CGM trust [1]</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.044</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [1]</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of TM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.161</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of TM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of TM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of TM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of TM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.046</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of TM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of TM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of TM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td>0.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.136</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of CGM trust [2]</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>0.095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External factors on perception of CGM emo appeal [2]</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.8 impact of each factor contributing to meaning creation process separately on the perception of marketing action in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal.

When each factor contributing to meaning creation process is evaluated separately from other factors, the results in terms of impact of a particular factor on the perception of marketing action in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal differs from when the factors were evaluated together (refer to table 5.7), which confirms the perspective
outlined by Finne and Grönroos (2009, p. 185). The implications on theoretical model and discussion of the findings will continue in Chapter 6.
Chapter 6. Discussion
The objective of this research was to [1] identify whether there is a difference in perception between the traditional and consumer generated media, and [2] should the individual factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) be integrated within marketing communication strategy of the firm. Additionally, the researchers aimed to compare correlation between factors contributing to individual meaning creation and communication media type, effectively connecting the two research objectives together (refer to section 1.3).

6.1 Perception differences between traditional and consumer generated media
Majority of previous researches focused on evaluation of the communication media primarily considered the technical characteristics of the communication media channel (Hoffman & Novak, 1997, p. 44; Daugherty, Eastin & Bright, 2008, pp. 19-20). These, studies defined technical characteristics of the marketing communication media and consequently enabled classification of traditional and digital communication media (which include consumer generated media) in a narrow and technical dimension. Yet, specifically the concept of interactivity of the media, which enabled many-to-many mediated communication process and is one of the defining characteristics of digital communication media (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; 1997; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; 1999), cannot be attributed solely to the technical differences between the traditional and digital and emerging communication media. In other words, interactivity of the communication media which enabled many-to-many communication and was defined as “a hallmark of the paradigm shift in both marketing and communication” (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998), cannot be solely attributed to the technical ability of the media to provide the consumers with the possibility of interaction with the firm, each other and other stakeholders, and other technical characteristics of the media only (refer to section 3.2). The interactivity of digital communication media potentially has an impact on perception of the marketing message given specific communication media type, which in turn may have an impact on the meaning creation process by the recipient of the marketing message.

In this particular research, the difference between the traditional and consumer generated media, has been consistent in terms of trustworthiness construct of perception of marketing action. In all of the instances, marketing message delivered via traditional media has been perceived as more trustworthy than the same message delivered via consumer generated media. In terms of emotional appeal construct of the perception of marketing action the difference between traditional and consumer generated media occurred in 50% of instances and was not consistent between two media (refer to table 5.6). This implies that in terms of emotional appeal the difference between the traditional and consumer generated media appears in some cases, and should be evaluated on individual basis, given specific situation and settings.

The consistent differences in the perception of trustworthiness of marketing message delivered via different communication media and partial differences in some instances in terms of emotional appeal suggest that communication media should not only be evaluated based on technical characteristics of a specific media type, as was previously done, but also in terms of impact on the consumer’s perception of marketing action. These findings have profound implications on classic linear communication models as well. Specifically, Shannon-Weaver communication transmission model (1948)
perceived the transmitter, or the communication media, by itself having no impact on the recipient of the message. Similarly, Berlo’s communication model (1960) considered the media that is used to deliver a message to the recipient, but did not consider cognitive implications (such as perception of trustworthiness or emotional appeal) of communication media that might influence the cognitive process of message decoding conducted by the recipient of the message. Consequently, the cognitive process of message decoding may be altered by the perception of communication media by the recipient of the message.

Current research identified the differences in the perception of marketing action given traditional and consumer generated media in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal within fitness and recreational settings. The primary implications of these findings indicate that specific communication media differ not only based on technical characteristics, but also have impact on the perception of the marketing action.

6.2 Relationship communication framework implications
The statistical analysis of the relationship between the factors of the relationship communication framework obtained in part 1 of the survey and marketing action examples presented in part 2 of the survey (refer to appendix I) revealed that there is indeed a consistent, statistically significant impact on the perception of marketing action by the firm in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal that can be explained by the combined and individual factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). This is consistent with the previous research, which indicated that [1] historic, future, internal and external factors have actual impact on the meaning creation process from a marketing action (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 186) and [2] the impact of the said factors combined differs from the impact of every individual factor taken independently (refer to R square values in tables 5.7 and 5.8) (Finne & Grönroos, 2009, p. 185).

It is necessary to acknowledge that the R square values (refer to tables 5.7 and 5.8) are relatively low. Taken into account together the historic, future, internal and external factors have a mild impact on the perception of the marketing action, with the statistical model allowing to explain no more then 15-21% of the trustworthiness and 7-9% of the emotional appeal constructs in traditional and consumer generated media. Taken each factor individually, the historic factors impact on the perception of trustworthiness of the marketing action has the dominant numerical values with statistical model enabling to explain 13-18% of the relationship in traditional and consumer generated media. The future factors impact on the perception of marketing action in terms of trustworthiness enables to explain between 4-10% of the relationship in traditional and consumer generated media. The rest of the factors taken individually can explain the relationship in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal at level below 5% or there is no statistically significant relationship between the variables (refer to table 5.7).

The statistical analysis within current research confirms that personal characteristics of the customer in terms of factors discussed within the relationship communication framework do have an impact on the consumer’s meaning creation process (Mick & Buhn, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Finne & Grönroos, 2009). Therefore, adequate incorporation of these factors within firm’s communication strategy should improve overall marketing effectiveness.
6.2.1 IMC implications

Given the previously discussed IMC definitions (refer to section 3.1.2) incorporation of the additional consumer unique factors within firm’s integrated strategic communication process is potentially a lucrative prospect for a firm. Yet, unlike traditional integration of the different communication media given relatively basic customer information (such as demographics), the integration of unique to every customer historic, future, internal and external factors might be more challenging predominantly due to the multitude of characteristics that relate to each separate factor that impacts meaning creation and complications related to their acquisition and interpretation.

The incorporation of the relationship communication factors that contribute to individual meaning creation should ideally be done on the 3rd level of IMC integration within the firm (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 21-24; refer to figure 3.3). Essentially, the integration of these factors within IMC would constitute a profound extension in terms of customization and personal approach towards customer communication, which are the very objectives of the IMC integration process at this level (Schultz & Schultz, 1998, pp. 21-24). The commitment to true integration of these factors within IMC would also require the firm to review and optimize all of the sources of marketing messages (refer to figure 3.4), which inevitably will shift all of the communication processes executed by the firm and all of other stakeholders related to the firm and its customers in a single truly integrated communication process resembling Duncan and Moriarty communication intersections framework (1998, p. 6) and result into complete integration of the communication processes, both occurring inside and outside of the firm.

From a practical standpoint, such an approach to marketing communication strategy will heavily rely on extensive database management and ability of the firm to adequately obtain, quantify, and incorporate the unique customer information. Such an approach, while has a potential to improve marketing communication is extremely cost intensive, because acquisition and processing of historic, future, internal and external factors on individual level may require formidable resources allocated to the implementation of IMC. Given current findings of the research, the combined correlation of these factors had a mild impact on the perception of marketing action, suggesting that in the industries with relatively weak competitive forces the cost-benefit of the implementation of such integration of marketing communication may not readily add up. On the other hand, in a highly competitive environment such integration may prove to be relevant and beneficial if executed correctly.

6.2.2 Relationship marketing implications

At the core objectives of relationship marketing is relationship building and their maintenance, in an effort to create customer loyalty and long term mutually profitable relationship (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996, p. 19; refer to section 3.1.3). Therefore incorporating consumer unique factors that enable the firm to adequately evaluate their customers’ past experiences and future aspirations with a company, as well as unique characteristics and environment surrounding customers may be extremely beneficial for achieving general relationship marketing goals.
Current research, specifically the statistical impact of the relationship communication factors on the perception of trustworthiness of the marketing action supports previous research, namely commitment trust theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), which states that trust and commitment are two essential variables for a successful relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 31). Within current research framework, the factors contributing to individual meaning creation of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) were able to statistically account for trustworthiness perception of the marketing action in both traditional and consumer generated media consistently. These results indicate that for a successful relationship marketing strategy implementation a consideration of the said factors would be beneficial for a firm. In individual analysis of the factors impacting the perception of trustworthiness of marketing action the variable constituting historic interactions and experiences with the firm were the most statistically significant (refer to table 5.8). Yet, both statistical analysis of the current research and relationship communication framework authors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) favor the use of the factors combined rather than separately in an effort of building true integrated relationship communication.

In terms of specific relationship marketing strategy the use of the relationship communication framework may be the most beneficial under relationship customization and/or service augmentation relationship strategies (Berry, 2002, p. 65; pp. 66-67) because both of these strategies rely on in-depth understanding of the underlining customer needs and objectives. The consumer unique factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) may enable the firm to gain additional insights within these strategies.

The downside of the implementation of the consumer unique factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) involves primarily costs of acquisition and adequate implementation of these factors within relationship strategy. The cost-benefit of an implementation of these factors on a strategic level may vary, yet current research supports the notion that the said factors do have an impact on the perception of trustworthiness of the marketing action, and if trust, in particular, is one of the underlining prerequisites for a successful relationship, as indicated by previous research (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), the choice to incorporate the consumer unique factors of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) may be beneficial for firm’s relationship marketing strategy.

### 6.3 Individual comparison of traditional and consumer generated media in terms of relationship communication framework

The results of the research indicate that there is a difference in perception of the marketing action given utilization of different communication media, namely traditional and consumer generated. Namely, marketing messages delivered via traditional media were perceived by the respondent as more trustworthy within current research (refer to table 5.7). In terms of emotional appeal, respondents’ perceived marketing message delivered via traditional media less emotionally appealing then the same message delivered via consumer generated media only in case when the newspaper ad was compared to the Facebook marketing effort. In a specific case when an indoor TV ad was compared with the same message delivered via Twitter, the message delivered via traditional media (indoor TV) has been perceived more emotionally appealing then the same message delivered via consumer generated media (Twitter). When comparing a
newspaper ad with a twitter message the perception of *emotional appeal* was very similar between the traditional and consumer generated media, the same results in terms of mean difference between the indoor TV and Facebook ads occurred in the final comparison (refer to table 5.7). Similar results have been acquired after the evaluation of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal* when the respondents were separated based on gender (refer to Appendix III, table A2). These results indicate that it is technically possible to integrate the relationship communication factors on individual level into marketing communication (Finne & Grönroos, 2009), however confirm the notion that incorporating them together in combined fashion may be more compelling in terms of overall effectiveness of marketing communication.

The differences in perception of traditional and consumer generated media have been confirmed in terms of *trustworthiness* in all of the instances and partially in terms of *emotional appeal*. The mild correlation to the *historic, future, internal* and *external* factors related to individual consumer meaning creation has also been identified with the marketing action. Interestingly, there was no statistically significant difference in terms of correlation between marketing message delivered via traditional and consumer generated media and the said factors, both combined and separate correlation analyses were consistent (refer to tables 5.7 and 5.8). This implies that if the integration of these factors is considered in communication strategy by a firm, the integration effort should be even across traditional and consumer generated media, and the differences should be evaluated on individual cases and not based on general media type.
Chapter 7. Conclusion and Implications

7.1 Conclusion
Current research contributes to the field of relationship communication, and has implications in terms of practical implementation of integrated marketing communication, relationship marketing, consumers’ meaning creation, traditional and consumer generated media.

First, the difference in terms of trustworthiness and partially emotional appeal has been identified between the traditional and consumer generated marketing media given identical marketing message. Traditional communication media seem to be perceived more trustworthy than consumer generated media. In terms of emotional appeal there is a difference in some cases, which implies that it cannot be generalized that consumer generated media are perceived to be more emotionally appealing than traditional media or vice versa. Yet, the logical outcome of this research is to conclude that in terms of emotional appeal specific media (both traditional and consumer generated) have to be evaluated separately in a particular settings with a specific marketing message.

Second, the relationship communication theory (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) has been confirmed. Historic, future, internal and external factors combined and separately did indeed have a mild but statistically significant impact on the perception of the message and communication media in all instances in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal. Yet, given the fact that the correlation between these factors and perception of the marketing action was relatively low it can be argued that for businesses in relatively less competitive environment the addition and integration of these factors within marketing strategy may be costly and not very beneficial at least in the short run, while in a highly competitive environment, in which every detail may be essential and there is a technical possibility to make the appropriate adjustments to the marketing strategy, the addition of these factors within communication strategy may yield positive results, if implemented correctly.

Third, there was no significant difference in terms of numerical values for correlations between the perception of marketing action in both types of media and relationship communication variables. In turn the results were relatively consistent throughout both types of media. This implies that at least in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal appropriate amount of integration of the historic, future, internal and external factors should be allocated to both types of communication media.

The results of the study support the justification for further development of the relationship communication model. The study also acknowledges the difference between the relatively older marketing tools, like traditional media and relatively newer marketing tools, like consumer generated media, providing empirical support in terms of perception of these media within fitness and recreational settings.

7.2 Limitations and quality criteria

7.2.1 Theoretical background and methodology
In terms of theoretical background current research relied extensively on the recently developed relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009). However, the
individual components of this model, namely factors related to time and situational dimensions have been discussed in various researches in advertising and psychology related fields focusing on individual meaning creation during the course of the past 30 years (McCracken, 1986; 1987; Belk, & Heisley, 1988; Fournier, 1991; Domzal & Kernan, 1992; Mick & Buhl, 1992; Edvardsson & Strandvik, 2000; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos 2004). Finne and Grönroos’s (2009) theoretical model essentially combines past researches in a single framework effectively summing up major theoretical developments up until this point in time in this research field. On top of that the authors, namely Grönroos, of the theoretical model have been active within academic research field for over 30 years, and are considered do be pioneers in Nordic School of Services. Therefore, the researchers consider the theoretical background utilized in this research to be credible and relevant from both academic and practical points of view.

In regard to the chosen methodological approach, namely naturalism, objectivism and positivism, it can be argued that the data and underlining factors, related to psychological, behavioral and sociocultural aspects discussed within this research are too complex to quantify effectively (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 76). Consequently, the quantitative approach utilized in this research may have certain limitations, predominantly stemming from the evaluated issues. Specifically, the chosen methodological and quantitative approach to the research does not effectively represent rare occurrences is some cases. Yet, given practical implications related to the research questions, as well as discussed theories namely relating to IMC, the rare occurrence cases are not the primary focus of current research, identification of correlations between variables and perception, however is. Consequently, the chosen methodological approach is one of the most appropriate for the examination of underlining relationships between variables (David & Sutton, 2011, pp. 204-205; Bryman & Bell, 2007), and therefore is the most suitable given current research objectives (refer to section 1.3). In addition, the researchers strongly believe that rare occurrence cases are normally too hard and too costly to incorporate within firm’s marketing communication strategy at the current technological level and the ability to quantify the data related to the relationship communication model and consumers’ perceptions is essential for practical implications for both IMC and relationship marketing strategies, because both of these strategies rely on firm’s CRM solution in which the data is predominantly of quantitative format.

7.2.2 Empirical method, sampling procedure and data
The data collection has been conducted in a single geographical location (Umeå, Sweden), and consequently may be limited to Northern part of Sweden. The research settings represented different types of fitness and recreational activities that are present within other smaller fitness and health clubs in the region. However, the data collection in terms of time patterns associated with attendance (morning, midday, evening) is consistent with other studies within fitness and recreational industry (Shen, 2008). However, additional research in a different geographical location may be required to confirm the findings of the current study in fitness and recreational settings.

In terms of participants, sample bias, and the selected simple random sampling technique, the researchers went to profound lengths to ensure that all of the required criteria was met (refer to section 4.2). As previously mentioned, the estimation of about every fifth person approached by the researchers agreeing to participate in the study is
fairly accurate. The primary reason for why the participants declined to participate in the study has been acknowledged as lack of time. Therefore, given previous throughout discussion on sampling structure and procedure (refer to section 4.2), characteristics of general population (refer to section 4.1) and relatively consistent and rational reasons for declining the participation, the researchers strongly believe that sample bias during the data collection has been minimized and did not significantly affect the outcome of the study.

Current research was the first study to evaluate historic, future, internal and external factors that impact individual meaning creation collectively in a quantitative format. In regard to time dimension represented by the historic and future factors that are directly associated with the firm, the quantitative format of the study enabled the researchers to capture time dimension via structured scaled based on previous researches effectively (refer to section 4.3.1). However, capturing situational dimension, comprising of internal and external factors was captured partially. Referring to the figure 3.9a, it is evident that both internal and external dimensions of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) touch upon personal attitudes, personal interest, identity and trends, cultural aspects, traditions, competitive advertising respectively. Consequently capturing these two factors within quantitative study has been more challenging. The researchers opted to focus on personal attitudes and competitive awareness and trends measurements, primarily because there were previous researchers in the field (Gould, 1988; Agee & Brett, 2001), that reported statistically reliable Cronbach's alpha measures for similar variables and were consistent with selected settings for the study. The researchers acknowledge that to objectively capture both of these dimensions specific separate quantitative study might be required. However, for the specific objectives of current research (refer to section 1.3) selected scales have been thoroughly evaluated and deemed appropriate and sufficient by the researchers to answer specific research questions.

During the course of the study the researchers identified three distinct variables associated with the perception of marketing action by firm’s customer, namely trustworthiness, emotional appeal and informativeness measure (refer to section 3.2.3). However, during actual data collection (refer to section 4.3; Appendix I) trustworthiness and emotional appeal variables have been selected for the final version of the survey. The decision to drop informativeness measure from the current research has been motivated by several factors. First, the researchers conducted a pre-testing phase of the survey, which included informativeness measure scales. However the respondents, in a pre-testing phase, reported that the informativeness measure is ambiguous predominantly because the marketing message utilized in current study remained consistent across different communication media. Consequently, it became apparent that unlike trustworthiness and emotional appeal, informativeness measure should be measured incorporating different types of marketing messages. Second, and based on the feedback from pre-testing, incorporation of various marketing messages within current survey design, would significantly enlarge the entire survey, making it inconvenient and largely impossible for the participants to complete, as well as too complex given current research objectives for the researchers. Third, the incorporation of this measurement within survey design would shift the focus from relationship communication to a more comparison focused study between traditional and consumer generated media. In light of the research objectives, removing informativeness measure...
did not compromise the objectives of current research, however would be beneficial to include in the future research.

Since the research has been conducted in Umeå, Sweden and the survey was designed and distributed in English it can be argued that the results might have been compromised due to the language barrier. However, the researchers considered this issue in the survey development phase, and consequently in pre-testing phase required the respondents to evaluate and provide feedback on overall understanding of the discussed issues, which included language criteria. Consequently, none of the respondents during pre-testing phase reported the need for a translated version of the survey. Based on pre-testing results the choice has been made to go ahead with the English version of the survey.

The results of the study are based on statistical evaluation of the data from a sample of population, and while all of the precautions to ensure reliability and validity of the results have been considered by the researchers, the practical implications may vary based on specific business situation, and therefore should be meticulously evaluated by the individual(s) responsible for a particular marketing action.

7.2.3 Personal bias

Upon conducting the study the researchers brought their own perspective and background experiences in development, execution and data analysis that might have reflected on the chosen method for the study and consequent conclusions. At the same time the researchers aimed to ensure objective, non-biased and truthful collection, evaluation and presentation of the results within current research. Consequently, the researchers are confident that the method, data collection process and data analysis utilized in this research meet truth, validity and reliability measures.

7.3 Future research

The possibilities for future research are vast. The relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) is a relatively recent development and has not been research within marketing field. Similar situation revolves around consumer generated media. Specifically research linking consumer generated media with relationship communication model may shed additional light on the relationship between the factors contributing to meaning creation and characteristics of the consumer generated media.

Within integrated marketing communication field a research is required to identify how to effectively incorporate relationship communication framework within integrated marketing communication and overall relationship marketing strategy. Such a research if successfully and objectively executed may have profound impact not only on marketing in general, but also on business administration and corporate strategy.

The entire relationship marketing field is a relatively new phenomenon and with constant innovation in communication media, the ability of relationship building on personal level becomes increasingly important for customer retention. Relationship communication framework and issues discussed within this paper contribute to further understanding of these new possibilities, but in general are far from being completely defined and understood by both academics and marketing professionals. Current
research identified a statistical correlation between the discussed factors and consequently their possible contribution towards general marketing communication strategies. However, additional research is required that can be focused on practical implementation that would help firms to take full advantage of the discussed factors that impact meaning creation and consumers’ perception of marketing actions. Specifically, classifying the individual factors that contribute to meaning creation based on throughout criteria is still missing in the literature, the ideas, for instance regarding situational dimension of the relationship communication model (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) are still too broad for practical implementation, because this specific dimension captures consumer’s internal values as well as all of the possible external factors that might have an impact on his/her meaning creation process. Identification of specific groups of sub-factors and their clear definition and classification may help in faster adoption of these ideas within IMC and relationship marketing.

Another dimension related to communication media can further be expended and explored. Consumer generated media is one of the newest subcategories within new media marketing communication channels and enables very targeted marketing which potentially can incorporate the relationship communication framework factors because of its interactive nature (refer to section 3.2.2). However, as previously mentioned, classification of marketing media types based on their technical characteristics may not be entirely correct, because the perception and meaning creation from a marketing action is a cognitive process and technical characteristics of a specific media type may not fully explain the differences in individual consumer perception. As this research shows, some of the characteristics can differ based on a specific media type, therefore there might be other factors that can be generalized to the entire media types, which can potentially improve understanding and utilization of these media.

In terms of technical execution of the research, the evaluation of perception of the marketing action based on trustworthiness and emotional appeal could be expended in further research by specifically including informativeness or expertise variables. In current study these variables were initially considered, but upon initial analysis and testing were deemed to be not feasible. An adequate research to include these variables would require significant redesign of the survey, which would require the researchers to considerably expend the second part of the survey incorporating multiple marketing messages to appropriately assess the informativeness measure of perception of the media, which consequently would results in much longer time frame and more amount of resources required to successfully undertake such a study.

In addition the same format of the study based on different age groups might shed additional light on the perception and possible utilization of both relationship communication factors (Finne & Grönroos, 2009) and traditional and consumer generated media. It is plausible to assume that different age groups have different perception of the same marketing action in the same or different marketing communication media types.

Finally, future research may incorporate similar theoretical approach, but focus on different technological platforms such as smartphones, tablet computers, and others which are currently gaining popularity in marketing campaigns globally. The research may identify further differences or similarities between these specific communication media tied to a specific platform utilizing which the recipient of the message creates a
meaning from a marketing action. Further implications for different communication platforms, as well as communication media may be broad to light contributing to the existing practical and academic knowledge within general marketing discipline.
Acknowledgments

The researchers would like to thank Sofia Isberg, for time, feedback and help during the course of the entire project. Additionally, the researchers would like to thank Andreas Christiansen and IKSU fitness center for the information and ability to conduct the research on their premises and all of the participants of the study.
References


Appendix I
The following survey has been distributed to the respondents during the course of the research. The survey was optimized for paper distribution and the results have been encoded upon completion of the data collection process in the digital format to be analyzed in Predictive Analytics Software package (PASW).
Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in the survey. The survey consists of two sections the first sections aims to capture your attitude and perception of IKSU, while in the second part you will be tasked to evaluate a marketing message in different media channels. The entire survey should not take more then 7-10 minutes of your time, and we appreciate your contribution.

Privacy note:
This survey is anonymous. No data is recorded to enable personal identification of the responses. The collected data will be treated with compliance to Umeå School of Business research guidelines outlined in the business school thesis manual. No data will be distributed to the parties not related to the research and Umeå School of Business.

The research is conducted by students enrolled in Masters in Marketing program at Umeå School of Business, Alexander Mamalyha and Zhe Yin.

Thank you for your participation!
Basic information
Gender (please circle):
Male/female

Age: ________

Time spent at IKSU per week: ________

Part one. Please rate statements given the following scales.
1. Past experience with IKSU sports and fitness.
   1.1. I am satisfied with my overall past experience in fitness and sports at IKSU:

   [Strongly disagree] [Disagree] [Somewhat disagree] [Neutral] [Somewhat agree] [Agree] [Strongly agree]

   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

   1.2. As a whole, I am not satisfied with fitness at IKSU:

   [Strongly disagree] [Disagree] [Somewhat disagree] [Neutral] [Somewhat agree] [Agree] [Strongly agree]

   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

   1.3. I found IKSU staff and personnel to be knowledgeable and helpful when I needed their help:

   [Strongly disagree] [Disagree] [Somewhat disagree] [Neutral] [Somewhat agree] [Agree] [Strongly agree]

   [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
2. Future fitness and sports related expectations:

2.1. How much do you think you will enjoy fitness and exercising activities in the future at IKSU?

2.2. Please rate your feelings about your future exercising at IKSU.

2.3. How much fun do you think the fitness and sport exercising at IKSU will be?
3. Personal attitude towards sports and fitness:

3.1. I’m attentive to my inner feelings about my fitness

- Statement does not describe me at all
- Statement describes me a little
- Statement describes me about 50-50
- Statement describes me fairly well
- Statement describes me very well

3.2. I’m alert to changes in my physical fitness

- Statement does not describe me at all
- Statement describes me a little
- Statement describes me about 50-50
- Statement describes me fairly well
- Statement describes me very well

3.3. I’m aware of my physical fitness

- Statement does not describe me at all
- Statement describes me a little
- Statement describes me about 50-50
- Statement describes me fairly well
- Statement describes me very well

3.4. I’m aware of the state of my physical fitness

- Statement does not describe me at all
- Statement describes me a little
- Statement describes me about 50-50
- Statement describes me fairly well
- Statement describes me very well
3.5. I notice how I feel physically

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement does not describe me at all</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me a little</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me about 50-50</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me fairly well</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me very well</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6. I’m involved with my physical fitness (I am training on regular basis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement does not describe me at all</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me a little</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement describes me about 50-50</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement describes me fairly well</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement describes me very well</td>
<td><img src="circle" alt="Circle" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Awareness of general trends within sports industry and competitive services.

4.1. I encounter other fitness/sports related advertising outside IKSU

4.2. I have been looking for other fitness and sporting possibilities aside from IKSU

4.3. I am aware about the latest technologies and training techniques in fitness industry

4.4. I check/read/utilize information on new fitness techniques and technologies outside IKSU
5. Overall experience with IKSU.

5.1. IKSU uses the latest equipment.

5.2. IKSU staff is friendly and helpful.

5.3. IKSU offers a full range of services.

5.4. IKSU is well maintained.

5.5. The club’s facilities are hygienic.

5.6. IKSU uses the latest technology.
Part 2
In this part your perception of the same marketing media channel (printed ads, facebook/twitter messages and etc) will be evaluated given the same marketing message. Here is the actual ad:

English translation: “Test training guide at iksu.se. Win training time with personal coach.”

1. If you were to encounter this ad in a printed magazine or a newspaper (an example (1) is provided below), please evaluate the message and the media (printed ad in this case) on the following scales:

Example 1
2. If you were to encounter this ad in your Facebook news feed (an example is provided below), please evaluate the **message** and the **media** (Facebook message in this case) on the following criteria:

**Example 2**

| Dishonest | | | | | | | | | | Honest |
| Untrustworthy | | | | | | | | | | Trustworthy |
| Not convincing | | | | | | | | | | Convincing |
| Does not affect my feelings | | | | | | | | | | Affects my feelings |
| Does not touch me emotionally | | | | | | | | | | Touches me emotionally |
| Does not reach out to me | | | | | | | | | | Reaches out to me |
| Is not exciting | | | | | | | | | | Is exciting |
3. If you were to encounter this ad on the flat screen TVs at IKSU lobby (an example (3) is provided below), please evaluate the **message** and the **media** (static TV ad in this case) on the following criteria:

![Example 3]

- Dishonest
- Untrustworthy
- Not convincing
- Does not affect my feelings
- Does not touch me emotionally
- Does not reach out to me
- Is not exciting
- Honest
- Trustworthy
- Convincing
- Affects my feelings
- Touches me emotionally
- Reaches out to me
- Is exciting
4. If you were to encounter this message on your Twitter feed (an example (4) is provided below), please evaluate the **message** and the **media** (Twitter message in this case) on the following criteria:

**Example 4**

![Twitter message image]

English translation: “Test training guide at iksu.se. Win training time with personal coach.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dishonest</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Honest</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Untrustworthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not convincing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Convincing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not affect my feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Affects my feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not touch me emotionally</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Touches me emotionally</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does not reach out to me</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reaches out to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is not exciting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is exciting</td>
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</table>
Appendix II
Paired samples correlation analysis indicates the similar relationship between the measures pairs of variables.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Paired Samples Correlations</th>
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<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Pair 1 Traditional media trust 1 &amp; CGM trust 1</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.597</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 2 Traditional media Emotional appeal 1 &amp; CGM Emotional appeal 1</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.678</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 3 Traditional media Trust 2 &amp; CGM Trust 2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.462</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 4 Traditional media Emotional appeal 2 &amp; CGM Emotional appeal 2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.652</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 5 Traditional media trust 1 &amp; CGM Trust 2</td>
<td>201</td>
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<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 6 Traditional media Emotional appeal 1 &amp; CGM Emotional appeal 2</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.574</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>Pair 7 Traditional media Trust 2 &amp; CGM Trust 1</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.471</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair 8 Traditional media Emotional appeal 2 &amp; CGM Emotional appeal 1</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>.662</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A1. Paired samples correlation analysis of the perception of the traditional and consumer generated media in terms of trustworthiness and emotional appeal.
## Appendix III

Paired samples T test based on gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Pair 1 TM trust 1 - CGM trust 1</td>
<td>9.9810</td>
<td>5.20077</td>
<td>.56745</td>
<td>-.14054 - 2.11673</td>
<td>1.741</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.085</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 2 TM Emotional appeal 1 - CGM Emotional appeal 1</td>
<td>-1.702</td>
<td>7.259</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>-.3278 - .127</td>
<td>-2.149</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.035</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 3 TM Trust 2 - CGM Trust 2</td>
<td>3.679</td>
<td>5.854</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>2.408 - 4.949</td>
<td>5.759</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 4 TM Emotional appeal 2 - CGM Emotional appeal 2</td>
<td>2.119</td>
<td>8.190</td>
<td>.894</td>
<td>.342 - 3.896</td>
<td>2.371</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 5 TM Trust 1 - CGM Trust 2</td>
<td>2.01190</td>
<td>5.99698</td>
<td>.65432</td>
<td>.71048 - 3.31333</td>
<td>3.075</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 6 TM Emotional appeal 1 - CGM Emotional appeal 2</td>
<td>.238</td>
<td>7.250</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>-1.335 - 1.812</td>
<td>3.081</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 7 TM Trust 2 - CGM trust 1</td>
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<td>5.557</td>
<td>.606</td>
<td>1.449 - 3.861</td>
<td>4.379</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 8 TM Emotional appeal 2 - CGM Emotional appeal 1</td>
<td>.179</td>
<td>7.839</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>-1.523 - 1.880</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Pair 1 TM trust 1 - CGM trust 1</td>
<td>2.00000</td>
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<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 3 TM Trust 2 - CGM Trust 2</td>
<td>4.752</td>
<td>6.108</td>
<td>.565</td>
<td>3.634 - 5.871</td>
<td>8.415</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pair 4 TM Emotional appeal 2 - CGM Emotional appeal 2</td>
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<td>7.112</td>
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<td>4.147</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>Pair 5 TM trust 1 - CGM Trust 2</td>
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<td>5.80916</td>
<td>.53706</td>
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<td>116</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pair 7 TM Trust 2 - CGM trust 1</td>
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<td>5.899</td>
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<td>Pair 8 TM Emotional appeal 2 - CGM Emotional appeal 1</td>
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<td>.651</td>
<td>.058 - 2.519</td>
<td>1.892</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table A2. Perception evaluation of traditional and consumer generated media in terms of *trustworthiness* and *emotional appeal* based on gender.