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SPONSORING

Case: BASE

Scriptie neergelegd tot het behalen van de graad van Master in Meertalige Bedrijfscommunicatie door Sara Teuwen

Promotor: Dr. E. Van Praet
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THANKS

First of all, I would like to thank my parents for making it possible for me to study an additional year and allowing me to obtain this second master’s degree. Secondly, I wish to say a big thank you to my entire family and all my friends, for being so understanding throughout this hectic year. Another big thank you goes out to Bart Vandesompele and the entire Corporate Communication team at BASE, for allowing me to complete my internship with them. They immediately made me feel welcome and part of the team! I would also like to thank Luc De Bie, the professors and guest lecturers for making this a very interesting, exciting and above all challenging year!
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INTRODUCTION

I’ve always felt, especially while obtaining my Psychology degree, that interactions and communication between individuals fascinate me. However, throughout the courses and exercises of this extra year of Multilingual Business Communication, I’ve come to realize that I also have a certain affinity with corporate communication. The classes on crisis communication, press conferences and press releases showed me an entirely different side of communication. Besides the fact that I found this to be a very interesting aspect of communication, it also allowed me to explore my own personal strengths and abilities such as translating, designing layouts and writing texts. Thus, when the time came to choose an internship, I wanted to find a position that would challenge these new-found competencies as well as further enhance my languages.

I sent several CVs and application letters to companies both from the contacts within MTB, as well as companies that hadn’t already established a relationship with MTB, but whose services appealed to specific interests of mine (such as Kinepolis and SBS Belgium). However, the internship outline offered by BASE seemed to match my ambitions for an internship the best. During the interview at BASE, I got a good sense of the overall internship. Even though I wasn’t given that much specific information, the fact that most of the communication was done in English, that the company itself had a very challenging position and that it involved tasks such as launching events, assessing websites and writing press releases, very much appealed to me. As it turns out, the six weeks of internship were even more enjoyable and challenging than I could have hoped, not only because I arrived at the perfect ‘celebratory’ moment, but also because BASE, as you will read later on, is a true ‘challenger’.
I. PRESENTING: BASE

1. A brief History

1.1 KPN Orange

The story of BASE actually begins in 1999 when KPN Orange (a cooperation between the Dutch telecommunication company KPN n.v. and the British telecom operator Orange Plc.) obtained a license from the Belgian Government to build the first Belgian GSM 1800\(^1\) network for outsourcing. This made KPN Orange the third mobile phone operator in the Belgian market after Proximus and Mobistar, which were introduced in January 1994 and Augustus 1996 respectively.

KPN Orange decided to use Orange’s strong brand name and logo for their services in Belgium. They wanted to convey a name that guaranteed innovative technology, worldwide expertise and a range of international success stories to the Belgian public. Moreover, the new, technologically advanced KPN Orange network better met the needs and expectations of the growing group of mobile phone users than the other operators and it was able to comply with the stringent environmental regulations imposed by the various legislative bodies in Belgium.

As the youngest Belgian mobile telecom operator, KPN Orange was able to establish a market share of 13% in a period of just two and a half years. The company’s values played a significant part in this success story. The surprising, innovative and honest approach in products and services, as well as in relation to personnel management and communication, has enabled KPN Orange to create a brand unanimously acknowledged as one of the strongest on the Belgian market.

In 2000, France Télécom bought Orange Plc. from the German Mannesman group as a way of strengthening its European position. This actually meant that France Télécom, which already owned Mobistar in Belgium, owned shares in both KPN Orange and Mobistar, a situation that is not allowed by law. Consequently, KPN jumped at the opportunity to become sole shareholder of KPN Orange and as of December 2000, KPN Orange is a 100%-owned subsidiary of the Dutch telecom group. However, this also led to the condition that the Orange brand name had to be transferred to France Telecom and that KPN Orange was obliged to continue its operations under an alternative name. Thus KPN was confronted with the

\(^{1}\) GSM 1800 is the Global System for Mobile Communication that operates in the 1800 MHz bands
challenge of creating an entirely new Belgian brand and saw this as an ideal opportunity to create the ultimate brand of the future.

1.2 The start of a new brand

The new brand had to reflect the reality of every day life and meet people’s needs and expectations and be a brand that was far more customer focused than technology oriented. The Belgian consumer had to be able to identify with it and the brand had to encourage both interaction and discovery. A new concept was born, now they just needed a name to go with it. The new name had to comply with a number of criteria. It needed to be recognizable, easy to remember, able for registration, usable in both the consumer and business market and needed to convey the previously thought-out concept. It was decided quite quickly that “BASE” would be a suitable name.

BASE stands for a new start, a new beginning, a root or stem. BASE is robust and authentic: a brand that people can count on. In short, a brand that delivers on its promises. BASE also stands for the development of a close relationship with the customers. Moreover, it closely fits the product of mobile phone services, as it is elementary and deals with sound.

The first BASE campaign was launched on the 18th of April 2002 and had one clear message: “Orange changes to BASE”. In order to increase the impact of the campaign, the change in name was paradoxically conceived as a non-event. Consumers are constantly confronted with companies and brands changing their names, but they are certainly not going to lose any sleep over it. Subsequently, BASE worked with the idea of regarding the entire name change process as an unimportant event. In this multimedia (television, radio, written press, billboards, etc…) the ‘non-event’ was proclaimed in television spots using three situations in which the consumer is confronted with the message that Orange is changing to BASE. Even though it would seem like the customers is thrown off guard by this announcement, it quickly becomes clear that the clients just carry on with what they were doing and don’t dwell on the matter. Together with the name change the former Orange shops had to be restyled to fit in with the new BASE concept and its clear, transparent and friendly nature. BASE wants to give its customers the opportunity to discover the added value of the BASE products and services in its own pace. That is why there are more seats in the shops as well as interactive displays and a website corner. There is even a place where you can actually “feel” the products. The customers can quietly take a seat and spend some time in the shop collecting information or obtaining valuable advice from a salesperson. The shops are designed to have a very relaxing and friendly feel, especially because of the new BASE
colour (blue), which is very serene and helps to make the consumers feel at ease. BASE even developed some special training programmes to assure the friendliness and professionalism amongst the staff. These programs are designed to familiarise them with the BASE philosophy and how to examine its impact on the customer.

In 2003, BASE repositioned itself with the brand slogan “Freedom of Speech”. It refers to each human being’s basic right, as included in many constitutions, which allows people to live and communicate in a safe and unique way. Thanks to mobile phones, people have been given the possibility to say what they want, where they want, whenever they want and to whom they want. Therefore, “Freedom of Speech” is a very broad and universal concept that relates to each individual and that is precisely how BASE wants to position itself.

BASE has continued to grow its data revenues and to enhance its data offers. Initiatives such as the offering of free data traffic and the new reduced pricing for data roaming have proven to be successful and confirm the position of BASE as challenger. In the 1st quarter of 2008 the client base welcomed another 251,928 customers, which brings the total customer base close to 3 million (2,991,466, see graph 1), increasing the market share up to almost 24% (see graph 2 on page 12).

Graph 1. Evolution in customer base

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2 Data is anything in a form suitable for use with a computer, from texts, pictures
3 Roaming is the general term in the wireless telecommunication that refers to the ability for a mobile phone user to automatically get connected to another network when travelling outside the geographical coverage area of the home network by means of using a visited network.
A survey at the beginning of 2008 showed that 94% of the BASE customers state that they are “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with the overall BASE experience.

2. Structure

BASE is part of the overall KPN Royal Group and within this group, BASE belongs to the KPN Mobile division. KPN Mobile is a single company operating in three countries: Germany, Belgium and The Netherlands. By the end of 2003, KPN Royal held 97.84% of the shares in KPN Mobile n.v., with the remaining 2.16% owned by NTT DoCoMo in Japan. In 2005, NTT DoCoMo sold its KPN Mobile shares to KPN Royal. Nowadays, KPN Mobile n.v. is the 100% owner of E-Plus (Germany), KPN Mobile NL (The Netherlands) and BASE (Belgium) and has a 15% shareholding in Hutchinson 3G UK ltd. The KPN structure is outlined in chart 1 on page 13.

In recent years bought Tele2/Versatel and also took over the distribution points Allo Telecom and GSM Point Services, a chain of 9 mobile phone shops, in the Walloon region. Till recently, these shops were a distributor of exclusively Mobistar products. Since 2007, KPN has a majority interest in the Dutch mobile phone company Ortel. As Ortel also operates in The Netherlands and Germany, this acquisition enables KPN to expand even further throughout Europe.
3. Corporate identity

3.1 Management philosophy

The basic philosophy behind BASE can be summarized as “Changing the game”. This philosophy is based on the fact that telecommunication has developed into a basic service. Therefore, this philosophy reflects and strengthens the BASE mission to tackle things in a different way.

First of all, BASE wishes to not only change the rules of the game, but also the game itself. Their clear and unique market position enables them to anticipate any changes in the market or the consumers’ need. Secondly, BASE wishes to maintain a direct and open relationship with its customers, based on its corporate and brand values. This leads to a better perception of these values by the customers and enables BASE to communicate with them in a clear and transparent manner. Ultimately, BASE wants to talk to people in the same way they talk to each other, while welcoming and respecting any form of communication by which people wish to express themselves. That is the essence of BASE.

In addition, BASE also cares about the world its customers live in. For one, they have a very strong position on the use of mobile phones by young children. They believe that a mobile phone is not a toy and as such should only be used by people old enough to be responsible for their own phone. BASE also has a clear ecological policy and has developed their own project and mascot ‘Jack and Nature’ (press release in Appendix 1.1). In the BASE
offices, employees are encouraged to print out as few documents as possible, they have a garbage sorting system and ‘Jack’ also installed a new ecologically sound air-conditioning system. On top of that, BASE also tries to persuade its customers to opt for more environmentally sound options, such as an online invoice, instead of the paper one and to think before they print a BASE e-mail. Furthermore, BASE also sponsors and supports several projects in line with this ecological policy, but these will be discussed later on.

3.2 Corporate values

BASE wants to provide an added value for its customers, shareholders and staff. BASE as a company prides itself on being free from dogmas and other factors that might lead to an inhibited approach to the market and as such, they do not harbour prejudices and they try to communicate in a refreshing and clear manner.

As a group of people, BASE is constantly developing. They try to become better and stronger as a group and attach great importance to self-realisation. In doing so, they can operate as a motivated group in a very competitive and dynamic market and are able to respond quickly to changing market conditions. For example, the way the entire company celebrated the victory of their sponsored football team, is a true testament of that.

BASE as a company is also captivated by the possibilities and advantages of its products and services and as such, BASE is constantly exploring new ways to tackle new things and improve their own products.

3.3 Brand values

According to BASE, brand values should reflect the essence of the company and serve as a standard for customers to evaluate the quality of the goods and services. First of all, they want their products to display a high level of user friendliness. BASE always opts for simple solutions, relevant and adapted to the needs and expectations of the different target groups.

Secondly, BASE is always apparent in the way it does business. They translate complex processes into simple products and services and offer the best price/quality ratio, which makes them credible and reliable in the eyes of the customer. Moreover, they incorporate the idea of clarity in their refreshing and clear way of communicating. For example, not only do they want to show the world they care about the environment through their new ‘Jack & Nature’ project, they also display some real involvement by participating in the ‘warm jumper day’. On that day the heating in BASE got turned down by a few degrees and everyone at BASE just had to dress a little bit warmer.
Thirdly, BASE acts in a smart, swift and refreshing way, always searching for possibilities to distinguish itself from other operators, by offering unique mobile telephone services. In a way, BASE is always challenging itself and the market.

3.4 Strategy

The main strategy BASE uses is also considered its biggest strength. BASE carefully explores the market, looking for specific segments with special needs and expectations. Consequently, their aim is to create an added value by designing offers that specifically target particular market segments. For instance, even the fans of a specific football club can sign in on a special price plan (press release in Appendix 1.2). Besides the fact that they try to position themselves in specific niche markets, their overall positioning also entails a very specific corporate identity. First of all, BASE upholds a strong ‘we do it differently’ strategy. As they are the smallest operator and the last one to arrive on the Belgian scene, they need to take a different approach. They don’t want to be known as just another mobile phone operator, who’s just in it to make money off of their clients’ back. Instead, they offer a high level of transparency and clarity both in their pricing as well as through their policies. They also want to create more customer pull by resorting to alternative means of channelling and distribution.

Secondly, BASE also wants to become known as the “Feel good operator”. They want to create emotion around the BASE brand, because, as they are one of many operators in Belgium, they know they have to stand out. As such, they make sure that their communication and advertisement strategies are very much aligned. They ensure that any activities they organise or partnerships they establish, fit into their philosophy. These will be reviewed later on, when discussing sponsoring.

3.5 BASE as a challenger

In 2005, BASE established the Mobile Challengers Group. This group unites mobile phone operators who strive to achieve honest competition between the operators. These days the group consists of 7 members: BASE (Belgium), E-plus (Germany), Bouygues (France), Wind (Italy), 3 (Italy, Ireland, Sweden, Denmark, UK en Austria), Ave (Turkey) and Play (Poland). In total, this group represents 60% of the entire population in Europe.
The action group demands The European Commission and national regulators, like the BIPT\(^4\), to take even the smallest operators into account. The smaller operators are struggling to liberalize the sector, against the head start and the pressure maintained by the key-players. This is the case for BASE, the last operator to appear on the Belgian mobile phone scene and still feeling the disadvantages of that position.

Their position as a challenger is not just a concept or a vision for BASE, but it is a reality. In recent years there have been many cases that demonstrate their will and ability to fight for their own rights as a mobile phone operator. As the chief regulator officer of BASE, Marc Van Asbroeck put it: “It is very much like Star Wars. You have the evil empire, with the emperor in charge who will only deal with it’s own members and will protect its own business.” Continuing in that analogy, BASE, as the rebel army tries to attack the empire, not by underhand schemes, but merely through honesty. BASE already has the transparent pricing policy, but they also want to give people a look at the work behind the scenes of the big operators. They can charge lower tariffs because of their quasi-monopoly status and still profit off the back of the consumer. For instance, during the 3 GSM World congress in Barcelona, where all the ‘great operators’ meet, BASE was also present and didn’t keep quiet about the current situation. They pointed out that the European consumer pays too much for the mobile phone services in Europe, mainly due to the quasi-monopoly position held by the big operators (press releases in Appendix 1.3).

4. Product portfolio and customer profile

As stated in the strategy, BASE tries to identify market segments with specific needs and tries to offer them a custom made product. In that sense BASE tries to recognize a certain customer profile and develop a product that is practically 100% aligned with its exact needs.

4.1 Private use

Within the BASE product portfolio we have products for private use, which can be divided into the products that work with or without an invoice.

Mobile phone users who wish to call friends and family from any national network will probably benefit the most from BASE prepaid and BASE postpaid. Furthermore they have price plans especially designed for people who predominantly use their mobile phone to send

\(^4\) BIPT is The Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunication, the Belgian regulator
text messages (BASE Mania), or for people who want to be able to phone their friends at the same rate during the day as during the night (BASE Prepaid or BASE Zero).

BASE also has a special tariff plan for fans of the football club ‘Standard’. Aside from benefiting from advantageous rates, they also have the ability to activate a ‘Standard news’ service, which keeps them up-to-date on the latest news of their favourite club by means of text messages (Standard prepaid and postpaid).

BASE was the first to introduce ‘member gets member’ project. People who convince friends or family to switch over to BASE get a discount. In addition, people who have lots of friends and family that are also BASE members, get extra beneficial pricing plans (BASE 3 and BASE 3+).

Recently, BASE also launched two new special tariff plans: BASE Platinum and BASE Gold. BASE Platinum appeals to the heavy users of mobile phones, mainly for calls in Belgium and as such offers them an unlimited amount of calls to all networks for a fixed fee. BASE Gold has an equally stylish label as the Platinum version, but appeals more to the average and light user, who will spend about 7,5 hours per month making calls to his friends and family.

In the BASE shops, BASE also sells mobile phones, some of which have a special connection to the subscription options, such as a red and white phone for the ‘Standard’ fans and the stylish black ones with the platinum and gold logo, for the ‘BE stylish’ line.

Finally, the BASE MasterCard allows you to buy goods and with any purchase of 10 euros or more made with your MasterCard, BASE gives you free call minutes.

4.2 Professional use

BASE offers BASE Business to its corporate customers, which allows them to make calls to all networks in Belgium at a cheap rate and call fixed lines in more than 50 countries with the ‘International calls’ option for the same price. They can also use their free calling time to stay in touch with colleagues that have a BASE number.

BASE Business unlimited offers an unlimited amount of call minutes to both mobile and fixed lines in Belgium for a fixed, monthly fee.
4.3 Data services

BASE also provides the BASE BlackBerry, a mobile phone that is nothing short of a home computer. Using a Blackberry allows you to keep in touch with whatever happens in your office or in your personal life through SMS\(^5\), MMS\(^6\) and even e-mail.

Thanks to the fact that BASE is a ‘challenger’ who has a network with all the European challengers, you can call at advantageous rates when you choose one of the challengers' networks, while you are abroad. BASE has 434 roaming agreements in 205 countries. Even the downloading of data in foreign countries (data Roaming) is at a much lower rate.

4.4 BASE partners

BASE works together with several partners and once again, these partnerships are aimed at a very specific target audience. For instance, Simyo is an online telecom operator offering the lowest rates available in Belgium, by focusing on what is essential: making calls and sending text messages. JIM Mobile offers permanent low SMS tariffs, free on-line minutes and other interesting promotions and targets especially young people, mainly through its well-known mascot ‘De Joeri’. The partnership with ZONIQ ensures that BASE has the cheapest mobile phone tariffs all over the world.

In addition to these partners, BASE has also teamed up with two specific networks that enable a better and cheaper connection to specific countries. Ay Yildiz ensures advantageous tariffs to fixed and mobile lines in Turkey and neighbouring countries of Belgium. Chiama is known as a product for lovers of Italy, offering low and interesting tariffs to Italy.

4.5 Social benefits

BASE also offers several social tariffs, meaning they provide specific discounts to certain demographics. These offers are aimed at particular groups, such as people over the age of 65, people older then 18 who are for 66% disabled, the hearing impaired, people who have undergone laryngectomy, blind war veterans and people who receive a minimum income.

\(^5\) SMS means Short Message Service
\(^6\) MMS means Multimedia Messaging Service
5. Competing businesses

BASE has two direct competitors in Belgium: Proximus (Belgacom Mobile Ltd.) and Mobistar. Proximus, the mobile subsidiary of Belgacom, started with the operation of a mobile network in Belgium in 1994. At that time, GSM technology was still in its infancy and the user was a rare phenomenon, having to pay a fortune to be accessible by mobile telephone. In 1996, a second player appeared on the market: Mobistar. Although the operator tried to make a name for himself as being new and refreshing, its provision of services did not differ much from Proximus’.

5.1 Proximus

The Company. Proximus GSM, the first mobile network in Belgium was launched in 1994. On the 1st of July that same year, Proximus GSM and the former analogue Mob2 system were transferred to the subsidiary Belgacom Mobile. Its shareholding was then divided between Belgacom (75%) and Air Touch (25%), which later transferred to Vodafone in 1999. In August of 2006 Belgacom took over the 25% share Vodafone had in Belgacom Mobile, thus making Belgacom Mobile a wholly-owned subsidiary of Belgacom.

These days, Belgacom Mobile is the leading mobile telecommunications operator in Belgium, serving about 4.3 million customers. At the end of 2006 they were represented by a 45.5% market share of active customers.

As quoted on their website, Proximus is the “experience offered by Belgium’s leading operator”. They also want to emphasize key words such as leadership, proximity, innovation, confidence and benchmark. They consider it their mission to bring people closer and enrich their daily lives by offering the most reliable, innovative and easy-to-use mobile communication services. As such they are “constantly evaluating which risks could possibly jeopardise the fulfilment of this mission and how to protect ourselves and our customers by taking pro-active measures”.

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7 Analogue Mob2 system is an analogue mobile phone network that works with the Nordic Mobile Telephone in the 450 MHz bands
The products. Through Proximus, Belgacom mobile offers a wide range of telecommunications products and services to its residential and professional customers, with the largest HSDPA\(^8\) coverage in Belgium. Within these products they also differentiate between price plans with or without invoice. They offer traditional voice and data services (such as SMS and MMS), a broad range of mobile solutions for companies (mobile Internet, push e-mail) and have established roaming agreements with over 400 foreign networks in more than 200 countries.

With Pay & Go, Proximus offers a price plan that allows you to top up your credit when you need it. An extra addition enables you to call for free on the weekends (Pay&Go Together and Smile together). Proximus also designed a subscription plan specifically aimed at young people, that allows them to send free texts messages after 4pm and on weekends (Pay&Go Generation) and one which allows you to send texts messages for free at anytime (Generation MTV). They also have a commercial partnership with TMF Mobile, connected to the young and dynamic television-station ‘TMF’.

With Pay&Go International you can select any European country you want and your calls or texts messages to this country are offered at the national rate.

Proximus also has a specific price plan for SMEs, self-employed people, large enterprises and the public sector. They also developed the Proximus club loyalty program for long time customers.

Because of its close relationship to Belgacom, Proximus can also offer multimedia packs that include mobile phone, television and Internet connection.

Much like BASE, Proximus also allows a special discount for certain disadvantaged groups. People older than 65, people who are at least 66% disabled and have a limited income as well as deaf or hearing impaired people, people who have undergone a laryngectomy and servicemen who were blinded in action, qualify for a social tariff.

The sponsorships. Every first Monday evening of the month (except in July and August), Proximus sponsors the Proximus Movie Mondays at Kinepolis.

They also sponsor a range of festivals, such as the TransArdents (Liège), TW Classic, Graspop (Dessel), Rock Werchter, Werchter Boutique, Dour, Francofolies de Spa and Pukkelpop (Hasselt).

\(^8\) HSDPA stands for High Speed Downlink Packet Access is a third generation mobile telephony communications protocol, which allows networks based on Universal Mobile Telecommunications System (UMTS) to have higher data transfer speeds and capacity.
When it comes to sporting events, they also organise the Proximus Diamond Games in Antwerp, The Proximus Superbiker at Mettet and the Proximus Extreme in Brussels.

5.2 Mobistar

**The company.** Mobistar, who entered on the Belgian mobile phone market in 1996, is a member of the Orange Group, which bundles France Télécom’s main mobile activities.

The total amount of active customers at the beginning of 2008 comes to 3.6 million. At the end of 2007, Mobistar had a market share of 33%.

Mobistar’s vision, as it is mentioned on their website is “to create a better future where people can communicate and access information wherever, whenever and however they want”. Their mission is to “enable mobility experiences for individuals, communities and companies through relevant innovation”. They see themselves as honest, straightforward, friendly, refreshing and dynamic, in short they are ‘a brand like no other’. They want to ensure that the relation with customers remains their top priority at all times.

For Mobistar, life is the convergence of three dimensions: love, work and play. In line with this vision they developed a new logo that combines these three elements.

Thanks to a strategic partnership with Telenet and the Accor group, Mobistar can offer the largest hotspot network in Belgium: over 1100 available hotspots.

Mobistar wants to show its customers that they care about the environment. Mobistar makes every effort to ensure that its antennae blend in with the surroundings as much as possible. To do this, they make use of existing structures such as water towers, church towers, apartment blocks, etc. Mobistar also shares its sites with other Belgian mobile operators where possible.

In addition, Mobistar cares about the health of its customers and as such they want to inform people on the latest results regarding the propagation of electromagnetic waves.

**The products.** When looking at their products, we see that they also offer pricing plans with or without invoice and to private as well as corporate users.

For the occasional user they have Simply, the simplest way of calling or sending text messages.

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9 Hotspot is a Wi-Fi access point or area, in particular for connecting to the Internet
The more music-minded people might prefer Tempo Music and Tempo Music Monthly as it offers you access to the online Tempo music station and you receive free texts messages every time you top up.

Tempo Comfort enables you to make calls (3 calls of about one minute) even when you have run out of credit. Also, the higher amount you top up, the more advantageous your rates are.

Just like the other two operators, Mobistar also has a sort of loyalty plan. It has the ‘Tempo friends’ package through which you can call your Mobistar connected friends for free for 10 hours a month. Calling friends, who also have a Mobistar number, becomes even cheaper when using the Free Friends package or the Free All Friends package. Furthermore, they also offer you a subscription with 43 minutes (or 66 text messages) of calling time for a fixed fee every month or 68 minutes (or 125 texts messages) to all networks for a higher monthly fee (My 10 or My 15). My 45 is the solution for heavy users who make calls and send text messages to friends both from within the Mobistar network as well as connected to other networks. The Max All-In formula offers the same but also encompasses calls to foreign countries.

Mobistar also provides their own fixed landlines via Mobistar Fix and Mobistar Fix Anytime as well as Internet services such as ADSL and Internet Everywhere, which allow you to connect to the Internet everywhere. On top of that, Mobistar also offers a range of mobile phones that also includes a Blackberry.

Their corporate subscriptions include offers such as Connect Save, which guarantees the safekeeping of more then 350 contacts and Wire free office, which allows you to replace the fixed phone centres by mobile phones.

As a Mobistar customer you can also participate in the online ‘Orange world’. This site enables people to download ring tones, games and music and look up information on sporting events, television programs, linked through the SMS-system of your phone.

**The sponsorships.** Aside from the efforts they put into creating an environmentally sound network that doesn’t damage the health of their customers, they also have several ongoing projects that emphasize their social engagement. In 2006, they decided to focus on a social project and formed an association called ‘Participate!’. The aim of this association is to improve the lifestyle of persons with autism and their families. Even blind mobile phone users can benefit from Mobistar, as the operator has special Braille brochures to send out. This initiative started in 2003 in collaboration with ‘The Friends of the Blind’.
5.3 Positioning

When KPN-orange appeared on the mobile phone market in 1999, Proximus was by all accounts the big ‘monopolizer’ even though Mobistar had already been around for about three years and thus had gained a significant amount of followers. As the last one to join the ranks, BASE has always strived to nibble away at the market shares of these other two operators, as it is the only possible strategy for the newcomer. Currently, the mobile phone market in Belgium is divided in a slightly different way then it was six years ago. Proximus is still the market leader, but at this time, its share comes to about 45.5%, Mobistar follows with a market share of approximately 30.5 % and BASE accounts for 24 %.

When it comes to marketing strategies, we can clearly see that Proximus, as the market leader is determined to keep that position. Hence, maintaining their current customer base is their number one priority. Mobistar is also not trying too hard to gain new customers, but is trying to get more out of its current clients. BASE is still using both conventional as well as non-conventional marketing strategies to maintain and expand their client base.

As far as offers and customer profiles are concerned, we can see that all three of the operators have price plans that range from the occasional cell phone user, to the people who cannot be separated from their phones. They all have specific offerings for young people (JIM Mobile, Generation MTV/TMF Mobile and TempoMusic) and as to be expected, they all have beneficial tariffs for people calling to friends that are connected to the same network. However, it is BASE that has by far the broadest range of specific packages.

Plus, they all seem to care about minorities and social disadvantaged groups, as they offer them discounts. And they all play their part in the world around us. However, as they mentioned in a press release, BASE is offering Belgacom to take over their customers who are calling at social rates (press release in Appendix 1.4).

Even though Proximus was sometimes considered to deliver to the more conservative, business like people, they are now also sponsoring events that mainly appeal to young people. Mobistar and their vision, is targeted to music-minded people, but also to calm, relaxing persons who ‘expect more from life’. BASE as the “Feel Good Operator” targets both the young and dynamic individuals as well as anyone who values the ‘Freedom of speech’ and personal ways of communication.

At the end of 2007 the consumers’ magazine Test-Aankoop executed an extensive study on 100 different mobile tariff formulas. They wanted to find out which formula works best for the light, average and heavy user of mobile phones. They revealed that the BASE prepaid
Simyo card had the most advantageous deal for both the light and average users. The heavy users benefited the most from the BASE Gold option. In addition, Test-Aankoop noted that the price of mobile phone calls remains too high in Belgium and is hoping that the BIPT will respond by changing regulations on interconnection tariffs\textsuperscript{10}.

6. SWOT

6.1 Strengths

The main strength of BASE is without a doubt the fact that they apply the strategy of niche marketing. They thoroughly research the current market trends and try to develop specific packages, almost custom-made, for different groups. That way, people feel as if they are targeted as an individual and as such BASE can create a strong relationship with its clients.

Another strength is definitely their strong corporate identity. They display a high level of consistency between their corporate philosophy and the way they portray this to the outside world. I also believe they opt for some well-chosen sponsor projects in line with these company views. Their challenging nature also rears its head when choosing sponsorships. For instance they took quite a risk sponsoring a certain football team. Who knew that after many years, this team would once again become Champion of Belgium in 2008? In short, another strength of BASE lays in its entire integration and consistency.

BASE as the smallest operator and the last one to arrive on the Belgian scene, tries to challenge the market by exploring new segments and at the same time challenges the other operators, much to the benefit of the consumers (press release in Appendix 1.5). The fact that they are part of the mobile challengers group also ensures that they can offer mobile phone users low data roaming tariffs when these are abroad and connect to a challenger’s network.

6.2 Weaknesses

A mayor weakness of BASE is of course the fact that they were last to arrive on the Belgian mobile phone market. While Proximus and Mobistar were there to welcome the first mobile phone users, BASE only arrived when a lot of consumers had already chosen a network. Most of the consumers that already have a number with a certain operator don’t feel the need to change or might see the transition as too much of a hassle.

\textsuperscript{10} Interconnection tariffs are the expenses one operator has to pay to another operator, when establishing a call to its network
Also, the other more established operators, especially those with a connection to a government subsidised company, have a much larger budget to spend and can afford to reduce their prices, while still making profit.

Another weakness is definitely the fact that BASE has a limited amount of corporate pricing plans, in contrast to the multitude of choices there are for private users. Again, being the smallest operator, they could never be able to offer the same rates as the big networks, due to the fact that Belgacom and Proximus control both fixed and mobile lines in this country.

6.3 Opportunities

One of their opportunities comes from their actions as a challenger. By growing as a group and offering more and lower roaming tariffs in the future, BASE could have a strong position with people calling from and to foreign countries. Even if people pay less when calling abroad, BASE could still make a profit if they make sure those same people use their mobile phone more often. The idea is that these days, people abroad don’t call as often as they would like, because of the high rates. One would assume that people would normally want to call more from abroad (to inform family and friends) and would do so, if the international tariffs become almost the same as the national tariffs.

The next months and years will be crucial for several opportunities for BASE. For instance, there is a chance that the regulators could lower the interconnection rates. This would open up the corporate market for BASE, as calling from and to different operators would cost about the same.

Another opportunity arises from their greatest strength, the niche marketing. As there will always be new users on the mobile scene, there are always fresh segments to explore and packages to develop.

6.4 Threats

Even though BASE seems like the underdog in the whole mobile phone market, to this day, they have been able to hold their own against the other players. However, things are changing so rapidly on the mobile phone tariff scene, that they might run the risk of being completely dominated by the big players.

As mentioned before, the changes in regulations could have huge consequences for BASE and aside from it being a great opportunity, it could also pose a big risk. When the
interconnection rates are lowered so much, it becomes very beneficial to the customer, but it could also lead to a significant drop in profit and sales revenues.
II. SPONSORING

Nowadays, people are being bombarded by advertisements. As such, companies have to come up with new and better ways of attracting the consumers’ attention. One of the ways to stand out as a company is by organizing or sponsoring a unique program or event. According to ‘The House of Marketing’ who interviewed 700 marketeers in the beginning of 2008, on average 19% of the total marketing budget was spent towards event marketing. Not only do companies organise their own events, they also invest in other people’s events, institutions and programs that have already established their credibility and have their own group of followers. These days, it’s hard to watch any show without being reminded of the partnerships it must have with different companies. How many cooking shows really have their own choice in butter or ham? Sponsoring is therefore a new marketing tool that is fast becoming one of the conventional means and certainly one that deserves some extra attention.

My internship at BASE took place in the Corporate Communication department, where several of my tasks revolved around sponsored activities. These tasks included writing up press releases to announce a particular event, drafting flyers for a sponsored competition and evaluating the media coverage after a sponsored event. As such, I got a closer look at the way a company plans, organizes and evaluates its sponsorships.

1. What is sponsoring?

In this media-focused age, where the consumer is becoming better and more quickly informed by the Internet and other new media, the brand of a product is not the only source of product information available anymore. Thanks to the easy access to opinions, offered by other consumers and experts, the customer is also becoming more critical (Luc Delrue, s.d.) Therefore, a brand has to find other ways of constructing some kind of consumer relationship. It is not sufficient anymore to just show people certain aspects and advantages of your product as opposed to that of the competition. The consumers are looking for that little something extra, something that distinguishes a brand that will be bought from the other ones, left on the shelves.

The marketing communication mix consists of six different ways of communicating. Companies can strengthen their brands through Advertisement, Promotions, Public Relations, Direct Marketing, Personal sales and Events and Experiences (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007). Communication advisor Kees Van Maren notes that there have been some
significant changes over the last three decades in the consumer’s attitude towards these strategies. After three decades of shoppers wanting to buy more and more products because these were the must-have items that displayed the most advantages, we are now seeing a different kind of shopper on the market. For one thing, the efficiency of advertisement is decreasing and companies have more need for a real dialogue with their customers in order to attract more clients. Consumers are also rethinking their social priorities and have different personal values then the previous generation (Van Maren, 2001). As such, enterprises need to look for alternatives if they want to achieve higher brand awareness as well as a close relationship with their customer. They want to offer an added value, an extra service and a lasting impression. In that respect, ‘experience marketing’ has become a very powerful tool (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

Experiences can be created through lots of different ways, from designing a specific interior for the shop, to the product placement in a popular show or the organisation or sponsoring of a specific event.

Even though there isn’t one clear definition on what sponsoring exactly entails, it is most commonly seen as “the financial or material contribution to a project, program or person in the area of sports, culture, entertainment or social aim, in exchange for access to the exploitable, commercial potential that is associated with said project, program or person.” (Van Maren, 2001). However, there are several common key characteristics about sponsoring that appear throughout literature.

1.1 An agreement between partners

Sponsoring is a business agreement between two partners. The sponsor is willing to offer the sponsored partner an amount of money in order to guarantee an exchange. This exchange implies an added value for both parties. The sponsored one obtains money in order to be able to afford specific programs or events and the sponsor in return gets his name mentioned. In order to use the name ‘sponsoring’, there has to be a certain level of reciprocity. If a company donates money to an institution or an event without getting credited for it, this is called a donation or subsidy, not sponsoring (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Knecht & Stoelinga, 1997)

1.2 An indirect effect through association

The amount of direct marketing that hits our eyes, ears and mailbox has grown immensely over the last 10 years. Thus, it is safe to say that people are already getting enough
‘information’ about a product, through the conventional channels. (Van Maren, 2001). Where traditional advertisement is often build up around the name, logo and advantages of a certain product, sponsoring does not use these types of direct media. With sponsoring, a company tries to convey a message to the target audience without saying it out loud. As such, sponsoring is communicating by association, where the message is merely implied (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.; Lagae, s.d.).

By being present at a happening where people, preferably from the companies’ target groups, enjoy themselves, companies can more easily make a positive connection with their potential clients. Therefore, a company will most likely look for existing concepts that are already positively evaluated by the target audience, hoping to gain that positive evaluation themselves. By establishing or strengthening strong brand associations, a company can ensure that people make a much faster link between the product and a certain lifestyle (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007). This sort of resembles the way in which American high school students try to hang with the popular kids, trying to become ‘cool by association’.

When looking at the different communication media, we can note that a medium can convey two different types of messages. If you want to persuade the consumer to buy your product by listing its main features and advantages, you are using an informational message. When trying to project a certain image or aspect that is not directly linked with the product, a company is using a transformational message (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007). Sponsoring definitely works in an indirect way, as it tries to evoke a certain feeling trough an experience that can be associated with the product (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Lagae, s.d.; van den Wall Bake, s.d.; Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

1.3 Using emotions

Sponsoring is known as a ‘participation medium’. During a sponsored activity, the consumer watches, listens and participates. It is an interactive medium that allows companies to make a real contact with their current and potential customers (Lagae, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001). This contact, this relationship, can be seen as the intangible component of a marketing strategy. It works around emotions, feelings, by means of indirect associations (Lagae, s.d.). A company actually becomes part of the world the consumers live in and tries to establish a connection between the field of interest of the potential customers and the brand.

By allowing people to ‘learn through emotions’, companies can try to establish a positive link between a concept that is already liked and enjoyed by the audience and the product itself. People have fun during specific events or admire certain institutions or
concepts and these positive feelings might transfer on to the product. The next time people see this product, they might remember just how good they felt during the last sponsored event and thus attribute a newfound positive evaluation to the product (Vonk, 2001).

Besides the saturation of the direct marketing world, several other changes have been noted in the marketing and advertisement world. Due to the higher level of environmental and social awareness, consumers’ needs and priorities have shifted somewhat (Suèr, s.d.). The client is looking for that extra feeling that allows him or her to make the right choice between all those different brands (Delrue, s.d.). By creating a specific atmosphere we try to put the customer in a certain mood and through that feeling, try to establish a long lasting memory as well as create a certain amount of brand preference (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

1.4 A unique experience

A brand needs to position itself in a specific manner on the market in order to distinguish itself from its competitors. These days, we can safely say that consumers don’t know where to look first to see another product being recommended and let’s face it, it doesn’t have a positive effect on the credibility of brands (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999). Moreover, people today have so many choices and options at their disposal, that they can easily afford to ignore most of these ads. The consumers aren’t as easily impressed by marketing tools as they once were. Furthermore, we need to take into account the important role of the almighty remote control, which enables people to zap away with the greatest of ease during commercials (Van Maren, 2001; Delrue, s.d.).

As stated previously, people are looking for that extra something, the different approach, something that is actually able to move them. One of the aspects through which this can be achieved, is by using more emotion in communication. Instead of offering people just a list of advantages of ones product, we need to be able to evoke a positive feeling that they can link with the product. Some companies engage in what is called ‘cultural engineering’. They themselves act as cultural entrepreneurs and organise their own cultural activities without relying on an existing institution. They offer clients a whole new, unique experience next to the product or service they are already selling. For instance, several financial institutions organise competitions or have their own exhibition room, where clients can enjoy an afternoon of culture (Delrue, s.d.).

On the other hand, opting to sponsor an existing concept is often the safer choice. Companies can try to appeal to a large audience, in their natural atmosphere and while these are participating in an, to them, important event that centres on their hobby or domain of
interest. This activity already comes with its own audience, which either represents current or potential customers and has already established a certain amount of credibility (Delrue, s.d.; Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007). By sponsoring such concepts, the companies try to create that feeling of being indispensable. Who amongst us has not yet had an experience that ‘could not have been possible without the help and support of a certain company’? This way, they can interact with the target audience in real life and thus avoid using some of the traditional media while providing them a true real life experience (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.).

Even though a company wants to aid in that ‘once in a lifetime experience’, sponsoring should not be limited to a one-time deal. A brand cannot position itself strongly in the market by being associated with one team at one occasion (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.). Companies need to remind people of their activities on a regular basis in order to build a strong corporate identity (Delrue, s.d.).

1.5 Part of an entire marketing communication strategy

Sponsoring always needs to be part of a complete communication strategy (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999). Even though the traditional forms of advertisement might not have the same effect as before, due to the saturation of the market, a brand cannot hold its own, simply through sponsoring. Sponsoring needs to be integrated in the larger communication strategy and budget to make sure it has a strong enough impact (Lagae, s.d.).

People need to be informed on the upcoming events and sponsorships. If nobody knows that your company is sponsoring a certain concept, it will not have the desired effect. As such, a sponsoring deal needs to be announced, for instance through radio commercials, billboards or information on the company website. The deal itself also needs to be accompanied by billboards, flags or even the distribution of gadgets. These help emphasize the importance of the sponsorship and are putting the brand name out there (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Van Maren, 2001).

The integration within the marketing strategy does revolve around the budget and the alignment of the different media, but it also implies a certain consistency as well as integration. When choosing a concept that one wishes to sponsor, it is crucial that the concept fits in with the corporate identity of the company. Whether someone sponsors a youth club in order to project the image of being an innovative, young and dynamic company, or whether linking your brand to an evening of classical music enables you to convey a certain amount of quality in your products, the facts remain the same: if sponsoring is such a powerful tool, we
have to make sure that whatever is projected by the sponsorship deal, is in fact essential to the company and fits in with the entire strategy (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Van Maren, 2001; Delrue, s.d.).

As it turns out, banks and insurance agencies spend the most money on sponsoring. They probably want to step away from the image of the hard selling banker who only cares about the clients’ money towards a more human and if at all possible, fun image. Furthermore, in businesses such as the pharmaceutical and liquor industry, where there are strict limitations to the amount of advertisements, sponsoring is perhaps one of the only ways to appear in the public eye (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Van Maren, 2001).

2. Motivations for sponsoring

2.1 Increase brand awareness

The amount of visibility and attention companies achieve by getting mentioned during an event on billboards, brochures or shirts, is enormous. Especially if the press comments on the events and shows pictures with logos in the background or mentions the name of the sponsor in the same sentences as the overall success. This is where the key characteristic of sponsoring comes in: the powerful tool of association. Not only do people literally see and hear the brand more often, they are also building a memory around an event or a program that involves the brand. That is one good way to make a long lasting impression. A brand that is linked to a specific memory will be triggered more easily and as such will be more likely to become a top-of-mind brand (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999).

2.2 Create a specific corporate identity

Often it is not enough that a customer knows the name of the brand or product, sometimes there are different products, that are so much alike that it needs to stand out through something else. They need to convey a certain theme, a certain lifestyle. This is usually reflected in the corporate and symbolic image of the company. A strong and positive corporate image adds authority and confidence to an enterprise and at the same time, it is the basis for success and continuity and it can stimulate goodwill with all current and future stakeholders (Delrue, s.d.). By being a sponsor, a company can give a very realistic view and sense of their values and vision. It gives them the ability to show the consumer the human face behind the company. In that regard, it is not hard to imagine why banks, who all have the
same commodity, spend the most amount of money to try and be different from the others through sponsorships (Van Maren, 2001; Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

Sponsoring has also taken up another important place in the communication policy of a company. It is the perfect opportunity to display the Corporate Social Responsibilities (Van Maren, 2001, Delrue, s.d.). In this way, a company can try and prove its involvement and commitment to the community and show that they care about the world the consumer lives in (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Van Maren, 2001).

2.3 Create strong relationships

Although sponsoring happens in an indirect way, that doesn’t mean it can’t have a very direct impact (Van de wall Bake, s.d.). The directness comes from the real life interaction with the target audience. Not only is the company in a perfect position to start up a real dialogue, at that time it is also part of the world the consumer lives in. Sharing the same experience and realizing that a certain company values what you like, creates an intense bond and a much closer relationship with that company (Suèr, s.d.).

People nowadays have a far more individualistic look on the world of goods. The mass advertisement campaigns aren’t that successful anymore. Sponsoring has shown to be an effective medium to speak to a shopper at quite a personal level, via his or her personal domain of interest. It allows the consumer to have a real dialogue, a real relationship with the company (Van Maren, 2001; Suèr, s.d.; Hoogerwerf, s.d.). The fact that people go through an experience together, accompanied by the brand, is in itself a form of relationship marketing (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

Not only can the consumer get a better view of the company, but a sponsorship also allows a company to learn more about how their target audience thinks, what they like, and how they live their life. This can help the company in drawing up a more detailed profile of the visitor and potential customer (Hoogerwerf, s.d.). This can help the company make their own products even better in order to foresee better to the needs and expectations of their target audience (Hoogerwerf, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001).

2.4 Motivate employees

Although we traditionally view sponsoring as a marketing tool, it is not only useful in constructing a more clear profile of what is behind the products and services to the consumer, it can also motivate the internal team of employees (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.).
The fifth ‘P’ in marketing, ‘Personnel’, mustn’t be overlooked and is an essential part of the company that can also be affected by sponsoring (Delrue, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001). It is necessary for the employees to know what the company stands for, not only to create that ‘we-feeling’ within the company, but also because they are the day-to-day link with the customers (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.). Motivated employees can have a much bigger and especially more positive impact, when speaking to friends and family about the company.

2.5 Increase revenues

Even though a positive corporate image is very important, the main aspect of running a company is and will always be, to generate profit. First of all, sponsoring has the ability to put your product out there and to recommend it to the consumer. If the brand awareness goes up, revenues go up (Lokerman & Westermann, 2001; Knecht & Stoelinga, 1997)

In addition, sponsoring also makes it possible for the companies to develop extra products, in line with the sponsored theme. This not only offers them a great chance to expand their product portfolio but also enables them to develop some extra promotional actions before, during or after the sponsorship (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Van Maren, 2001). Even though these actions might be temporary, for instance a limited offer, related to the Olympic games, it enables people to find their way to the shops and the products more easily in the future. Even if a company that sponsors an event doesn’t sell any related products, but merely sells tickets to that event in its shops, it still generates extra traffic to the shops (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.).

2.6 Case: BASE

I believe that BASE has three main reasons why it added sponsoring to its marketing mix. The first one is the aim for more visibility. By sponsoring events, clubs and projects, BASE appears more frequently in the external world, and confirms that “BASE is a player and here to stay”. They want to assure their market presence throughout the year and they want to be where the (potential) customer is.

Secondly, they want to create a lasting connection with their current and potential customers. They want to show them in what way they differ from the other operators. They want to reach new customers, to tell them what BASE is all about, but they also want to show their current customers that they actually act on their mission and values. As such, BASE also uses sponsoring as a tool to enhance brand loyalty and achieve customer retention. BASE
wants to convey to the public that it is and always will be “the right choice” and that BASE as a brand is part of the customers’ universe.

Thirdly, not only do they want to create emotion in the world their customers live in, they also want to do this in-house. They want to create a BASE feeling amongst all their employees, which is why the employees often get discounts or the opportunity to win free tickets when BASE is sponsoring a specific event.

3. Types of sponsoring

3.1 Sport

Sport has always been perceived as a positive aspect in our society because of its beneficial effects on both the physical and mental health (van den Wall Bake, s.d.). These days, it is certainly a hot topic thanks to the upcoming health trends. The number of active sportsmen is climbing each year by approximately 14%. Sport has become a part of the every day thinking and living pattern of human beings. These days, sporting events are also amongst the most watched television shows (van den Wall Blake, s.d.). In addition, sport as a pass time, centres on the individual as well as the team effort. Thus sport has become an even more important part of society and as such it should not be overlooked by marketing strategists (van de Wall Bake, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001).

When a company decides to sponsor a team or a club it reflects certain dynamics, perhaps even competitiveness in the corporate image and it is sure to stimulate that ‘we-feeling’ sponsorships often do (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 2001; van den Wall Bake, s.d.). By sponsoring a team, a company can literally enhance the company’s team spirit. A company can also choose to sponsor a sportive event or an individual athlete, thus gaining a sort of ambassador for the company (van den Wall Bake, s.d.).

Even though sponsoring a team can be a great motivator, a company must remain aware of any external, potentially damaging circumstances. There are always the dangers of a losing streak, injuries or scandals (Van de Wall Bake, s.d.). As the saying goes, “never change a winning team”, a company should most definitely change a losing team.

BASE sponsors several different clubs throughout Belgium. BASE is the main sponsor for the Basketball club Ostend, Ghent and Leuven. The teams display the BASE logo on their shirts, fields, websites and communication material. For the Aalst basketball club, BASE is a co-sponsor and the BASE name and logo are mentioned in local campaigns on the radio channel ‘Radio Contact’ and in the regional newspaper.
Basketball is not the only field of interest for BASE, as they also sponsor several football clubs. They are the main sponsor of ‘Standard de Liège’ and its youth division. The players have the BASE logo on just about everything from their shirts to billboards on the field and banners on the website. This also means that BASE can count on the presence of a minimum of four players when organising a commercial action and on 10 occasions throughout the year they reserve the right to place an advertisement of half a page in the Standard Magazine.

They also sponsor the ‘Royale Union Saint Gilloise’ where they have the BASE logo on their field, website and printed material.

Another sport that BASE sponsors is volleyball, through the team of Maaseik. The BASE logo is once again depicted on their shirts and website, but also on the cars of the players and in display cases in the VIP lounge. They also have an advertisement deal with the club magazine ‘Membership of Maaseik’ and the business club will promote BASE within their community.

BASE also uses these sponsorships in order to promote a bit of team spirit amongst the BASE employees, as they get a chance to win or order some tickets for the games. Recently, when Standard became the Belgian Champion, they even had a special BBQ in the BASE offices, attended by some of the players, followed by a signing session. We can see that this sponsorship is fully integrated in their marketing communication program, as they also have a special price plan for the supporters of the Standard club, as well as mobile phones in the team’s colours. The week after the historic victory by Standard, BASE also published an ad in ‘Jobat’, referring to the victory and their sponsorship (see ad in Appendix 2.1).

3.2 Culture

As I mentioned earlier, the shopper we encounter today has other priorities and he or she values different principles. Culture, with its timeless aspect, has the ability to play a profound role in answering to these changes (Delrue, s.d.). Cultural sponsorships, which can range from exhibitions and individual artists, to performance art, theatre and music, have always been associated with creativity, innovation and quality (Van Maren 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Delrue, s.d.).

In that way, a cultural sponsorship shows some differences with sports sponsoring. Where sports focused more on the common strive for victory, a cultural sponsorship can be more effective in enhancing and strengthening one’s qualitative image and corporate identity. We can also note a difference in target audience. Where a football match reaches into the
houses of millions of people via television, a concert has a much smaller range and is aimed 
towards a much smaller market segment (Van Maren, 2001).

The concept of cultural engineering, where companies organise their own cultural 
activities or competitions, has already been mentioned and as stated, it is an excellent way to 
provide your customers with a unique experience. However, most of the time companies 
choose to sponsor a concept that already exists and already has its own audience and 
established value. On the one hand this can potentially mean a stronger and more positive 
influence and on the other hand it means that the companies themselves don’t need to add that 
much more press to the activity, as it is already known (Delrue, s.d.).

BASE has partnerships with different cultural activities and institutions. They are 
partner of the Flanders Festival Ghent, the Walloon festivities, Promethea and the Bozar. 
They also sponsor several SMS-poetry competitions, in association with the Flanders Festival 
Ghent, the Ghent poetry centre and the “Théâtre de la Place”. This is a great opportunity for 
BASE to put the concept of ‘Freedom of speech’ into practice as it combines the trendy 
activity of sending text messages with a completely different and artistic expression of 
language. They also sponsor the film festival in Ostend and at the same time, they have a 
structural partnership with ‘Toerisme Oostende’ for several events throughout the year.

3.3 Society

Sponsoring social activities is probably the best way for a company to project its 
Corporate Social Responsibilities. Social programs can contain issues regarding education, 
healthcare, the environment and development (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 
1999; Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

Supporting several causes is a sure way of boosting the social image of a company (Van 
Maren, 2001; Hoogerwerf, s.d.). It shows the consumer once again that the company does 
more then just provide excellent products i.e. that it also cares for the world the consumer 
lives in. Instead of being seen as a company, it wants to profile itself as a corporate citizen 
(Van Maren, 2001).

The term ‘cause marketing’, developed in the USA, refers to the way a company 
participates in raising money for a certain cause, again showing its human face. (Hoogerwerf, 
s.d.; Van Maren, 2001) However, with this kind of sponsoring it is preferable that the 
company sponsors one or different causes for a longer period. Otherwise, it may not establish 
a good connection between the company and the cause and it might even have the adverse 
effect. People might think that the investment in the project is just a one-time deal and a way
for the company to try and trick the consumer into buying its products. A longer sponsorship deal on the other hand will strengthen the corporate identity and gives the consumers more time to find out more about the company and the project (Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

By sponsoring an educational institution, a company can try to become a real part of a community. Schools are often the meeting grounds of parents in a community and they also provide a good base for current and future employees (Van Maren, 2001).

As we all know, the world as a whole is currently under a new environmental trend. These days, people actually expect a certain amount of involvement in the environment by the big corporations. Having sponsorships that reflect how environmentally sound a company is, is therefore a very smart way of communicating with the customers (Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

As I stated before, BASE wants to do its part in improving the world its customers live in. One way through which they communicate this desire, is through the initiative ‘Nature Jack’ (press release in Appendix 1.1). BASE, together with Jack, is sponsoring two nature projects (Natagora and Natuurpunt), described on its website. Not only can the customer find many ways of working towards a better environment on that website, but by actually acting on these ideas customer can gain points. Every few months they can ‘donate’ these point to a specific program, mentioned on the BASE website. The program with the highest score will consequently be sponsored by BASE. This way, they can communicate their values to the customer base, as well as ensure the participation of their clients.

BASE also has a structural partnership with Unizo\textsuperscript{11}.

3.4 Media

Media sponsoring entails the sponsoring of television programs, radio shows and magazines (Suèr, s.d.; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Van Maren, 2001).

Television sponsoring can happen through various ways, such as product placement, prize marketing, item sponsoring, program sponsoring, billboarding (Van Maren, 2001) and infotainment (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999). Even though the products or logos may appear during the show or be handed out as prizes, a sponsor may not influence the content of the program, except in the case of infotainment, where the company appears on the show as an expert on the subject (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999). The same goes for radio shows and Internet programs (Van Maren, 2001).

\textsuperscript{11} Unizo is the ‘Unie van zelfstandige ondernemers’
Sponsored media in the type of printed magazines are different from normal magazines because they have specific marketing communication objectives, they consist of different feature articles, some of which centre around a sponsor or its product and are usually free. They can be very useful in informing the target group about a new product line or a company’s image, and it also assists in making some sort of connection, perhaps even establishing a dialogue between the company and the target audience (Suèr, s.d.).

Sponsored media often have the ability to reach more people then other sponsoring deals. However, except for television shows, the target audience of this type of media is hard to predict (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999).

BASE has partnerships with the television channels RTL and VMMa and with the music channel Q-music. However, as these sponsorships focus much more on events, they will be discussed in the next type of sponsoring.

3.5. Events (entertainment)

Events can range from a party to festivals or even amusement parks. The only criteria are that it has to be ‘eventful and entertaining’ (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999).

Events are usually places where a large group of like-minded people gather together. The most important benefits of an event are that it involves a large group of people and that the profile of the visitors is most likely known in advance (Van Maren, 2001; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999). Moreover, an event really gives a company the opportunity to establish a direct dialogue with its customer base, for instance, through the use of gadgets (Lagae, s.d.).

Entertainment is probably the purest form of ‘emotional learning’ as it almost always entails some sort of specific experience that is being shared by both the consumer and the company. As such, it can create a very strong and lasting impression (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

An event is usually a one-time occurrence and more manageable because of short-term commitment. However, if you want to reap more benefits from this strong connection and make this experience a quintessential part of your corporate identity, a company might wish to sponsor the event on an annual basis (Lagae, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001).

As far as events are concerned, BASE is a very active sponsor when it comes to the summer festivals in Belgium. They sponsor the Cactusfestival (Bruges), the ‘Lokerse Feesten’, Suikerrock (Tienen), the Ghent festivities, the ‘Fêtes de Wallonie’ (Namur), the Ardentes (Liège), Ghent Jazz and the ‘Mechelseplein Feesten’. For many years now, they
have invested lots of time and energy in order to communicate about the latest editions via their website and radio channels.

BASE also has partnerships with several amusement parks. These offer a ticket and subscription discount to BASE employees, in order to motivate and reward the employees.

The partnerships with the television channels (RTL and VMMa) enable BASE to be represented during the RTL Parade and the VTM Live tour, by logos on flags and gadgets. They also sponsor the ‘Foute Party’ by Q-music and not only can you find all the details about it on the BASE website, BASE also sells tickets to the event in their BASE shops.

4. Criteria for sponsoring

Sponsoring can have such a profound impact on the way the corporate image and identity is communicated to the public that it is important to establish a few criteria that have to be considered when choosing a sponsorship.

4.1 Brand fit

With sponsoring, the company is most likely to get the biggest amount of visibility, which is a necessary condition for brand recognition and brand awareness (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007). As such, it is of the utmost importance that the sponsored programs fit in with the nature of the brand (van den Wall Bake, s.d.; Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Van Maren, 2001). Sponsoring can also be used as a mean to distinguish oneself from its competitors and as such it is important that the sponsored program has a unique quality (Suèr, s.d.; van den Wall Bake, s.d.). Ideally, a company should choose a program that is likely to generate an enormous amount of positive attention, which fits in with the brand identity and is unique (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

Aside from projecting an intangible theme and lifestyle, a sponsorship also offers the opportunity to develop future marketing activities and products. Thus, it must be fully integrated in the entire marketing strategy (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Van Maren, 2001)

Whether it concerns the environment, sports, social programs or events, BASE chooses sponsorships that fit in with their values and their vision. For instance, the sport clubs and especially the youth teams emphasize their dynamic and innovative character. In addition, BASE also wants to build, indirectly, on the awareness of BASE as the supplier of mobile phones, but in a non-intrusive way. At the summer festivals BASE is present with huge SMS-
screens. People from the audience can send a text message to the number displayed on the screen and the entire audience can read these messages. Often they even link a competition to these text messages. That way BASE is part of the event and the entertainment, does not push a product offer, but still maintains a clear link between the experience BASE offers and its role as a mobile phone provider. The fact that they have been doing this for the past years only adds to their credibility and consistency.

4.2 Target group

The important question to keep in mind is whether or not the target group of the program is about the same as, or at least strongly resembles, the consumer group the company wants to contact. It might be useful to conduct some research into the expected target group of the sponsored program or to sponsor an already established program as these usually have a good sense of the amount of visitors they will attract and what demographic characteristics these visitors possess. Another thing to keep in mind is the geographical factor. The sponsored program might be just what the company is looking for, but it is important that the target audience can get there (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

Another question that is worth asking is: ‘Is the target group large enough?’ Knowing that a sponsorship can be a large investment, a company must make sure that it can reach a large enough audience (Van Maren, 2001).

As BASE targets several market segments, they also sponsor very divers clubs, events and programs. The festivals and poetry competitions are mainly designed for young dynamic people, who are not afraid to communicate in their own way. The sport clubs should attract lots of sport fans who enjoy being amongst people and sharing their thoughts with friends and family in a very open way. When preparing for an event, BASE is also able to make a pretty good estimation of the number of visitors that will be attending the event.

4.3 Desired effect

Different sponsorships as well as different reasons and strategies behind a sponsorship require different planning (Lagae, s.d.). As such, it is recommended that a company has a certain effect, a certain goal, in mind before they decide what kind of sponsorship they will embark upon. A company has to follow a different course of action whether they're aiming to expand their customer base or whether they are trying to keep their current base and increase the brand loyalty. Does the company want to give potential customers the chance to get to know the company and its products better or are they already familiarised with them? The
answer to the question might determine whether or not certain programs or events are better suited than others (Lagae, s.d.; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Van Maren, 2001).

Secondly, at the end of a sponsorship, a company will want to evaluate certain aspects of the company and the sponsorship. Therefore, it is useful to propose certain goals and objectives, so that these can be measured and calculated after the sponsorship deal. Even though the evaluation of intangible concepts such as increased brand loyalty or a stronger customer relationship cannot be measured in absolute figures, visibility, sales revenues and brand awareness can and should be measured (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Lagae, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001; Hoogerwerf, s.d.). This can be done by comparing numbers, conducting a press analysis or even by taking surveys (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Lagae, s.d.; Van Maren, 2001; Hoogerwerf, s.d.).

Another way to evaluate a sponsorship can be through researching specific differences. For example, if a company has set up a new website and has put the URL\(^{12}\) for that website next to its name or logo during a sponsorship deal, they can measure whether or not the traffic on the site has gone up (Lokerman & Westermann, 2001).

BASE has calculated that in 2007, 32,000 text messages were sent to the big SMS screens that they had put up on the festival grounds. That means that 32,000 people participated and as such, noticed the screens and the BASE logo. BASE also knows that these festivals can reach about 2.7 million people. We can safely say that these festivals generate a huge amount of visibility for BASE as well as large amounts of press coverage after the events.

4.4 Multiple sponsors

Different companies can be interested in sponsoring the same program. Therefore, it is important to have a good sense of where you want to position yourself as a company amongst other sponsors.

First of all, there might be some other enterprise that a company simply doesn’t wish to be mentioned with. Those can be competitors or perhaps companies that have a bad reputation. Even if a company has a perfect reputation, one can still ask itself if they want to be associated with these other sponsors. Seeing as indirect association is one of the main strengths and advantages of sponsoring, it is a very powerful tool. Companies would therefore

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\(^{12}\) URL stands for Uniform Resource Locator, a label that refers to the specific location of an information source
not want to be associated with businesses whose values are in direct contrast (Van Maren, 2001; Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007).

Another important question when dealing with multiple sponsors, deals with purely practical concerns: “Will we have enough room and place to show our own name and product?” (Van Maren, 2001). There is the possibility that not only your logo or products, but that your entire message gets diluted by the many other present sponsors. It that regard, it is never a bad idea to stand out in a unique and original way at a big event where there are multiple sponsors present (Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lagae, s.d.).

On the other hand, other sponsors could also be potential partners. There might even be some similarities in the corporate identity and no real competition as far as products are concerned. That way, companies can choose to sponsor something together, thus establishing the basis for a strong network as well as emphasizing each other’s corporate identity (Van Maren, 2001).

4.5 Budget

As mentioned before, a sponsorship deal is part of an entire communication and marketing strategy, and as such a sponsoring budget needs to fit in with that same strategy. With sponsoring, we are not only talking about the cost of the partnership itself, but also the additional costs of announcing the event through ads, banners and gadgets (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999; Kotler, Keller, Robben, Geuens, 2007; Lagae, s.d.). Gadgets can make the partnership between the sponsor and the sponsored one very clear and are in itself a communication medium. A gadget usually contains the colours, name and logo of the brand and when it is something hip, trendy or usable, people might enjoy using it around their friends. A well-chosen gadget can even become a must-have item, especially amongst young people and can act as an ambassador of the brand (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999).

Much like with other marketing media, you can never really predict the exact amount of money a sponsorship will generate or cost. If all goes to plan, a sponsorship might enable a company to develop new products and establish further actions. In that case, a relatively small investment on a sponsorship deal might amount to a high rise in profit, but it might also mean that the company will need to be prepared to invest even more time, money and energy in the deal (Van Maren, 2001).

Another benefit of sponsoring is that the prices, in comparison to other marketing media, are relatively lower. For instance, it would cost a company almost the same to run a 30 second add during the intermission of a football match, than it would to sponsor one of the
teams. If that team wins, it might also create a huge amount of extra free publicity (Van Maren, 2001). If you also take into account that several aspects of a sponsorship can be fiscally deducted, it is a true win-win situation (Lokerman & Westermann, 1999).

The amount of articles and extra magazine editions that got published after Standard’s historic victory was enormous. If BASE had to pay for all of these publications, it would have cost a fortune, but thanks to a well-chosen sponsorships the newspapers were filled with BASE logos without any extra costs.
III. TASK & RESPONSIBILITIES DURING INTERNSHIP

My timing to start working at the Corporate Communication department of BASE couldn’t have been better. When I started work on Monday the 21st of April 2008, the entire department was in a bit of a frenzy because, as of Sunday, BASE had become the main sponsor for the new Belgian Soccer Champion. BASE has been the main sponsor for 'Standard de Liège' for almost a year, but the triumph over Anderlecht was a historical victory for the team, meaning an enormous amount of publicity for BASE (as the logo is depicted on the players T-shirts).

My first day started with me finding my way around the intranet and getting an idea of BASE as a company. I tried to get a sense of its main values and vision, had a look at the most important events that had taken place in the last year and got acquainted with the general way of working.

During the course of my internship I had four main tasks, which consisted of several small tasks, for which different departments had to work together. These tasks were: writing and reviewing articles for the BASE Overview (an external newsletter), updating the BASE events website, assisting in the launch of the SMS-poetry competition (designing an extra website, flyer and drafting a press release) and participating as a member of the Corporate Communication team.

1. BASE Overview

1.1 Background

Every few months, BASE is supposed to publish an external newsletter: the BASE Overview. In this ‘paper’ we shed some light on the different corporate projects and results, products and sponsoring activities that have occurred over the last months. The last edition had not made it out, so it needed to be reviewed and adapted to fit in with the time frame of September 2007 till April 2008. It was my responsibility to search through press releases, presentations and articles to find exciting themes that would create interesting articles for the newsletter.

1.2 Execution

First, I had a look at the current edition, just to get a sense of the overall mood the paper was meant to convey. Then, I browsed through the press releases to see if there had been any important announcements by BASE that could be the basis for an exciting article. I also went through the press reviews that the corporate assistant had already put together. These reviews
cover every article concerning BASE and its activities, from almost every Belgian newspaper. During my research, I also conferred with a colleague, who had been responsible for the previous edition, to discuss which articles could stay, should be adapted, or had to be replaced in full.

Once I had found several interesting topics, like the 3GSM World Congress, a series of takeovers by KPN and several events sponsored by BASE, I tried to combine some of the press releases and articles into a coherent text. Over the next few days, I drew up some drafts of potential articles. I tried to make sure that the articles were informative as well as entertaining, that they had a catchy headline and that they were accompanied by nice visuals. Once I was satisfied with the result of the text and the matching photos, I submitted the articles to the corporate communication manager.

After two weeks, we revisited the subject of the BASE Overview and I sent the texts to our in-house prepress layout executive. He then combined my texts and photos into the structure of a newspaper. In the days that followed we proofread the paper, just to make sure there were no grammatical errors and that we were happy with the final layout. We then took all the final texts from the paper and sent them to our translating agency, so that they could be translated from Dutch to French and English. In the meantime, we discussed how many copies we wanted in order to get an invoice from the company that would provide the final version. When the translated texts were sent back from the translation agency, they needed to be reread to make sure that they had translated the texts in the right way and with the right connotations. Once these were reviewed, I sent them back to the prepress layout executive to combine them into the overall paper. As texts in different languages often vary in size, we also needed to do a proofreading of these versions. In the meantime, I also made contact with the district managers to find out how we were going to distribute the BASE Overview amongst the BASE shops.

1.3 Evaluation

By the time I left BASE, the newsletters were in their final versions and we had gotten a price estimate from our printers. However, they still needed to be sent to the different BASE locations.

I believe that making a newsletter in one of my English classes thoroughly prepared me for this task. Even though this newsletter was in Dutch, it still helped me to keep track of some important features like attractive headlines, content, fonts and the overall layout.
2. SMS-poetry competition

2.1 Background

My second large assignment came with the launch of the SMS-poetry competition in Ghent. BASE organizes an SMS-poetry competition in three cities throughout the year, each one with a different theme. This year’s theme, in line with that of its partner the Flanders Festival Ghent, was ‘1001 nights’. The goal was to have a website up and running by the time the competition took off. However, seeing as the competition started only a few days later, this wasn’t feasible for the external design department. We decided to continue work on a new website, but in the meantime, we would build an extra segment on the BASE events website. My task consisted of drafting up a text that could be placed on the events website, so that people would be well informed on the practical information concerning the competition and that they also got a sense of why BASE organizes such events. Later on, I was also asked to design a flyer for the competition.

2.2 Execution

Several meetings with the sponsoring coordinator and pr-manager, as well as our in-house web designer gave me a good idea about the general concept behind these competitions. I also reviewed the posters and press releases for the previous editions, in order to find the same tone for the text that would appear on the site. I wanted this text to contain several informative elements concerning the rules and practicalities of the competition, but I also wanted to highlight the BASE concept behind it and I wanted the text to attract and motivate as many participants as possible. I also hoped that by emphasizing the prizes and by adding a direct message to the reader (“Immerse yourself in the fairytale like environment and surprise us with your creativity!”), people would respond more quickly and in bigger numbers.

Besides a text, I also wanted to put an attractive visual on the site, to accompany this event. Since we were collaborating with the Flanders Festival Ghent and they had several wonderful pictures in their brochure, in line with this magical theme, I wondered if we would be able to use one of their visuals. I browsed through the brochure of this year’s edition of the festivities and found an appropriate picture that encompassed both the eastern theme, as well as the SMS-concept, i.e. a hand, decorated with henna. After some e-mailing back and forth with the communication manager from the Festival, we gained permission to use the visual and were able to obtain the original picture in high resolution.
As our website is built up in three languages, the text had to be translated in French and English. Instead of sending these texts to our translating agency, I felt it might be faster as well as provide a great exercise, if I were to translate the texts myself. Since they all had to display the same feeling, all three the texts had to be slightly altered during translation. I sent the French and English version to my bilingual colleague and the corporate communication manager for approval. Together with the picture, the SMS-poetry competition package was now ready to be sent to our in-house webmaster and after we discussed the design of an extra banner, based on the visual, it was ready to be put on the web (the text can be found in three languages on www.base.be/events).

The only thing that was missing from this package was a form that stipulates the contest regulations. As BASE had already held competitions like this, I got to work on a previous version and just adapted the names of the collaborators, the dates and prizes. After my colleagues and the legal department reviewed it, this was also ready to be put on the site.

In the meantime, I was already thinking about the press release that needed to accompany the launch of the competition. Again, I took a look at the previously issued press releases concerning the SMS-poetry editions. Based on these versions, as well as the online text, I began to write my first press release. BASE has a specific structure to its press releases, so I followed that structure and I also did my best to follow the guidelines, provided in the classes concerning press releases. I tried to give a very specific answer to the who, what, where and when questions in the beginning of the press release as to inform the reader immediately. Next, I tried to establish three clear paragraphs. In the first one I discussed the BASE concept behind the competition in greater detail. In the second one I described the rules for the competition and in the last one I mentioned the prizes and added a call to action. The boilerplate is a standard on all the BASE press releases, so I didn’t need to concern myself with that aspect. This press release didn’t need to be translated, so I wrote it, sent it out for approval and later that day our press relations' manager sent it out (press release in Appendix 1.6).

Furthermore, together with our partners, we decided to make and distribute some flyers to give the event some extra attention. It was my task to design the layout and the text for these flyers. I wanted to work with the same photo that we had placed on the website and use this visual of the hand as a main focus point. The flyer was going to be the size of a postcard, so I needed to keep the information concise, yet appealing. As the visual of the hand was set against a black background, I immediately had an idea for the overall look of the flyer. I wanted to keep the black background and place the text in white, in a sort of Arabic
handwriting that would match the henna on the hand and that would be in line with the ‘1001 nights’ theme. I summed up the most important and basic information about the competition and after trying out different sizes, fonts and layout structures, I decided that I was also going to add a sentence that would hopefully encourage the readers to participate.

My colleagues liked the flyer and together we did some further tweaking. We decided to use a slightly different font and to place last year’s winning poem on the back, so that people would have an example of an SMS-poem. I thought this was an excellent idea and we also decided to add the URL of the website on the back to try and generate more traffic. Once we were completely satisfied with the result, we sent it to our prepress layout executive for the final touches. He added an eastern motive on the background and aligned the logos from the different sponsors (flyer in Appendix 2.2).

Since there are different partners participating in this event, it was necessary to get everyone’s approval. We got a very positive reaction from our partners and they agreed to distribute our flyers. We needed to know exactly how many we wanted to distribute in order to get a detailed invoice regarding the printing costs. We received the invoice for the 15,000 flyers on Tuesday morning, by Tuesday afternoon the invoice was processed and by Thursday the flyers had arrived in the BASE offices. From there the crates had to be shipped to the different partners, as well as be distributed amongst our district managers, so they could be handed out in our shops.

2.3 Evaluation

The day after the launch of the press release for the SMS-poetry competition, I saw the competition being announced in an online newspaper and on a blog. The next day, I found an article concerning the competition in the written press. The flyer itself got lots of positive responses from external partners.

As the competition is still going, I don’t know how many people are participating, but I do know that the flyers are being distributed around Ghent, as I have seen them lying in the BASE shops and on several other location (Vooruit, NTGent, Bijloke,…) with my own eyes.
3. Updating BASE events website

3.1 Background

Since I had been looking at and working on the events site for the SMS-poetry competition, I noticed that several things weren’t quite up-to-date. Also, I figured that people who heard about the SMS-poetry competition might find their way to the events website. As such, I felt this could be a perfect opportunity to highlight some of the other projects and events BASE is sponsoring, to make sure that people know about them and perhaps get inspired to revisit the site on a later day.

3.2 Execution

I volunteered to write some extra texts that could replace some of the outdated information and be posted alongside of the other topics on the website. These texts included several sport sponsoring activities. I sat down with our web designer and consulted him on how the updating of this site usually works and whether or not I had a limited amount of writing space.

Consequently, I had a look at the teams BASE sponsors and did some research on their history and current scores. I tried to combine this information into a small and informative text that would highlight some of the team’s great accomplishments as well as its evolution.

These texts also needed to be translated to French and English and since the texts were very short, I translated them myself, but sent them to my colleagues, the sponsoring manager and corporate communication manager, before submitting them to our webmaster so that he could put them on the website.

We were in luck, because just a few days after these texts were put online, another one of our teams (volleyball club Noliko Maaseik) won the volleyball play offs! We decided to add another text announcing their victory and congratulating them.

3.3 Evaluation

Thanks to the guest lecturers and exercise on building and assessing a website, I already had some useful tools to construct a text, specifically designed for a website. As there is a limited amount of space you need to get your message across in a very short and snappy way. It is also important to grab the visitors’ attention with a certain fact or photo, as they might otherwise quickly click-away from your site.
4. Press review BASE

4.1 Background

Every year BASE assesses how often and in what way they have been mentioned in the media. Seeing as I was there up until the end of May, I got to do the evaluation of the first two quarters of 2008. As one of the biggest events this month was the celebration of the Standard victory, I was also asked to put together a file, containing all the articles and pictures that had appeared in the media on that topic.

4.2 Execution

Our press manager showed me the results of last year’s press analysis and walked me through the different numbers and percentages, explaining what they meant and how she calculated them. She also gave me access to two different article search engines (Mediargus and Pressbanking). I had to try and find all the articles written about BASE, write down their headlines, dates and source of publication. Afterwards, I had to read them and evaluate whether BASE was depicted in a positive, negative or neutral way. I found this last aspect to be a bit challenging, as I wasn’t quite sure what the definition of a positive article was. Hence, I asked my colleague to give me some examples and for the first couple of articles I checked with her whether or not I had chosen the right evaluation.

When looking up the articles, I noticed that BASE is a very frequently used word, especially in the French articles. Thus, it was necessary to add some extra search terms like ‘mobile’ or ‘operator’. Furthermore, I also looked up articles on our competitors, Proximus and Mobistar. These articles were not researched as detailed as the ones that mentioned BASE, as our only goal was to find out how many times they were mentioned in the media. Seeing as both of our competitors are quoted on the stock market (as opposed to BASE, a privately held company), we couldn’t just enter their names in the search engines, as this would produce far too many articles, some of which just quoting the companies’ current stock value.

Afterwards, I counted all the articles of the two operators, reviewed my list of BASE articles and put the two together in an Excel sheet. I then calculated each operator’s percentage of media coverage during one month and compared them in a graph. I did this for the beginning of 2008, going from January, till the end of May.

As the BASE Standard story was generating lots of free publicity, I was also asked to put together a binder, containing the most important articles that had been written on the
subject. I looked up different articles, again using the search engines. Because we keep all of
the newspapers and magazines that arrive at BASE for more then a month, I was able to use
lots of original copies. The articles that we didn’t have, were printed and fitted to an A4
format. I organised them in a chronological order, starting from the day of the victory to the
weeks that followed the match and the festivities, held in Liège. This folder was then put in
the reception of the BASE building, so that visitors could browse through it and share in the
BAE success story.

4.3 Evaluation

Even though this task took up a lot of time, I felt it really helped me in getting a better
view of the company. I could read up on all the latest events as well as learn more about the
relationship between BASE and the other operators. Sometimes I still wasn’t sure about the
connotation of an article, but my colleagues were always ready to discuss the article with me
and together we would decide on the positive, neutral or negative tone of the article. By the
end of the analysis I realized that this sort of project can be very useful to a company. They
can track their visibility in the written press, as well as look at their share of media coverage
compared to the competitors.

5. Part of the Corporate Communication team

As part of the Corporate Communication team, I assisted in the drafts of numerous
internal mails. These includes several mails to announce the good news about the festivities
that would accompany the Standard championship, one to announce the employment
regulations concerning the first and second of May, one to inform people that we were
changing suppliers, one to inform people on an upcoming sampling action, etc… I also got to
sit in on a few team meetings, were we would discuss ongoing and future projects.

Furthermore, I translated several articles and press releases. Most of the time these were
handed to me in Dutch, French or in English and had to be translated to English or Dutch.

During my last week of internship, the team was preparing a presentation on a new
BASE product. I was asked to research some potential magazines in which we could place
advertisements for the new product. First, I was given a detailed briefing on the overall look
and feel of the product environment and on the type of magazine they were looking for. They
also supplied me with several Internet sites of publishing houses and the Media Marketing
catalogue, which describes every magazine in Belgium.
To assist me in my quest, I drew up a list of characteristics that would describe the target audience for the new product. I then tried to link this description to some corresponding characteristics of magazines. Based on these features I spent a whole afternoon looking up different types of magazines and reading the additional information on the demographics of their readers, their circulation and their advertisement costs. When I came to the end of the Media Marketing catalogue, I had found several magazines that matched my description. I sent the file containing a list of magazines and their key-characteristics to the press manager so that she could look them over and add or remove some magazines, before the presentation. She found the file to be very detailed and useful for the presentation.

As was the case in many companies this year, BASE also hosted the social elections during my internship. As such, everybody was asked to pitch in and aid in some administrative work, like filing envelopes, labelling and looking up names and functions.

Meanwhile, our Standard story wasn’t quite over yet. As this historical success was very important to both Standard and BASE, we felt it was an excellent opportunity to celebrate, together with all the BASE employees. We decided to invite some of the Standard players over for some festivities and a signing session. Needless to say, this event required some additional planning and organization aside from the daily tasks of writing articles and mails. On Thursday, the 8th of May, the big day had finally arrived. We were welcoming five players of Standard, two deputy coaches and a moderator (Leo Van der Elst). In just a short time, our BASE cafeteria needed to be transformed into a welcoming ‘Standard’ arena, by clearing the tables and making sure that the place was filled with red and white decorations, mixed with BASE flags. Even though it was a very hectic day, we still had enough time to enjoy the big celebration as well.
IV. EVALUATION

1. Professional knowledge

1.1 Interaction between departments

Working in the Corporate Communication department of BASE has undoubtedly offered me some new perspectives in the way a large corporation operates. Not only did I get a chance to watch the inner workings of a team, I also witnessed the interactions between different departments and different companies. One thing is for certain, when you are working in a company, you can never really work alone. When I was working on the newsletter for one of the MTB classes, I only had myself and three other team members to consult. The external newsletter I made at BASE required the assistance from the communication department, the HR department, the layout department, the legal department and an external translation agency. In a way, this can seriously delay a process, but on the other hand, when you are sending something out into the real world, I believe that the more people have agreed on the concept, the better the result will be.

1.2 External partners

The great thing about working for a communication department was that I actually got to communicate with the outside world. First of all, there is the press. As I had learned from the English communication classes and guest lecturers, your relationship with the press is a very important and powerful thing. While making the press analysis, I got a good sense of just how many times BASE was mentioned in the news and whether or not it happened in a positive way. It is important that the press releases your company issues are exciting enough to get picked up by the press. However, it is equally important that you are willing to provide the journalists with an answer or a witty one-liner, when something important happens in your sector. Which was the case when BASE announced that they had made Belgacom an offer to take over their customers who are calling at social rates (press release in Appendix 1.4).

Second of all, there are several different ways of communicating with your customers and these all need to be aligned as much as possible. Not only does the information on your website need to be the same as what was written in a press release, there are also other external partners to take into consideration. For instance, for the SMS-poetry competition, we were working together with the Flanders Festival Ghent and the Ghent poetry centre and as
such we needed their approval on flyers before we could print them. We also needed to stay in contact with them about what, how and when we were communicating to the consumer.

1.3 Part of the company

I hadn’t really given it much thought, but as soon as I started working at BASE, my friends and family started asking me questions about BASE. As if had suddenly become the expert on all BASE matters. Now that I think about it, I realise that as soon as you start working for a specific company, you are considered a representative of the company and are expected to know all about that company. As such, I feel that motivated and involved employees probably make the best ambassadors and offer lots of free publicity.

It also surprised me how quickly I started to see BASE as ‘my’ company. Not only did I feel very welcome in the team, right from the start. I was also quick in defending the company when anyone mentioned it, whether it was on the news or at the dinner table. That ‘we-feeling’ obviously kicks in pretty fast and is a very powerful tool.

1.4 Writing skills

I believe that the competencies I got to work on the most, are my language and writing skills. I had to draft several internal and external mails, articles and texts for the website. As such, I got a good sense of the different ways of writing, whether these were formal or informal and directed at employees or a specific target group. In addition, translating multiple texts and press releases certainly enhanced my vocabulary.

2. Human knowledge

2.1 Working in a team

Working in the BASE Corporate Communication team has led me to believe that, although I consider myself to be an independent worker, I thoroughly enjoy working together as a team. On the one hand, you have to get more then one approval, but on the other hand, it can be very beneficial to combine different perspectives.

2.2 Challenging nature

During my internship, I realized that there wasn’t such a thing as a ‘typical day’, when working for a communication department. Often there would be a specific to-do list for that day, but due to unforeseen circumstances, such as the launch of a press release by one of our
competitors, our priorities needed to be reassessed. As such, we needed to work at a very high-paced level, which I must admit, was very thrilling.

The same goes for writing press releases. Knowing that the press might pick up your text and construct an article around it, meant that there was a lot of pressure to write a compelling story. I now know for certain that I enjoy these extra challenges within a corporate environment and that it is definitely something I will look for in a future job.

2.3 Creativity

When it comes to creative tasks, whether this is in every day life, during classes or exercises, I am never the one who takes up the graphic or creative side of the job. I had on one occasion designed the newsletter for an English class, but that was built around several articles and with the help of an entire team. As such, when I was asked to create a flyer for the SMS-poetry event, I wasn’t so sure if I was the right woman for the job. Even though I didn’t regard this creative aspect to be a big part of my personality at first, I did however enjoyed making the flyer and it seemed to go quite smoothly.

3. Internship and MTB

3.1 Courses

First of all, the courses on English, whether they focused on vocabulary, economics or specific types of communication, have probably been the most useful during my internship. I immediately got to put the classes on press releases into practice, when writing or translating a press release. As I stated before, having learned the basics on how to construct a newsletter or write a press release during these classes, made me so much more aware of certain aspects. I tried to keep all the important features in mind and felt much more confident in executing these tasks. Especially during the translation of several press releases, I was able to fall back on my newly acquired, financial English vocabulary.

The content of the website exercise provided me with a better view on the practicalities of navigating on a website, as well as ways to generate more traffic (for instance, through banners and links). It also helped me to realise just how important it was to generate more traffic to a company website.

The paper we had to write for the guest lectures on recruitment forced me to think long and hard about my own competencies, my personal strengths and assets. As such it gave me a very good view of what I was capable of doing and what kind of job I should look for.
3.2 Corporate partnerships

The group projects on assessing a website, constructing a marketing communication plan and ‘employer branding’ were very interesting and above all very challenging.

First of all, working together in teams for most of these assignments meant a great deal of extra planning and organizing. At times, it was very stressful to listen to so many different opinions before making a decision, but as in real life, there are always different perspectives you need to take into consideration. However, I do feel that for some of the projects, the teams (ranging from 2 to 10) were a bit too large, making it more difficult to meet up with the entire team and leaving more room for free-riding.

Being able to work together with different companies on real life projects was such an enrichment to this year. Not only did we get the chance to work out a very detailed and realistic task, but the fact that we got a real life briefing by the company and that we were evaluated by those professionals, made it that much more exciting. It also allowed us to get a glimpse of the business life where you have to take into account matters such as budget, corporate identity and the feasibility of certain projects. These extra obstacles made the projects much more realistic and were a good exercise in preparation of the real thing.
V. REFERENCES

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WEBSITES

www.base.be
www.mobistar.be
www.proximus.be
VI. APPENDIX

1. Press releases
   1.1 BASE rekruteert “Jack” om samen het leefmilieu te verdedigen
   1.2 BASE Standard: De mobiele aanbieding voor alle Standard supporters!
   1.3 3 Group, KPN Group and Play Move to Bring Down Data Roaming Prices
   1.4 BASE doet Belgacom voorstel voor overname klanten sociale tarieven
   1.5 KPN Senior Executive: “Belgians will soon pay the price for lack of
government vision on telecoms”
   1.6 BASE organiseert vierde editie van de sms-poëziewedstrijd in Gent

2. Visuals
   2.1 Ad in Jobat
   2.2 Flyer SMS-poetry competition
BASE rekruteert “Jack”
om samen het leefmilieu te verdedigen

Brussel, 03 december 2007 – De mobiele telefoonoperator BASE moedigt zijn klanten aan om te kiezen voor een online facturatie. BASE streeft ernaar om de impact op het leefmilieu van de papieren facturen die traditioneel via de post worden verstuurd, te verminderen. Om haar actie te ondersteunen werd een mini-site ontwikkeld waarop de klant een project kan kiezen dat zij/hij graag door BASE gesponsord ziet in samenwerking met twee milieueen Natuurpunt en Natagora. De klanten worden online geholpen door Jack, de mascotte die het project stap voor stap volgt.

BASE is ervan overtuigd dat ook een telefoonoperator een belangrijke rol moet spelen in het zoeken naar oplossingen voor een beter leefmilieu. Intern werden werkmethoden al aangepast zoals de beperking van de printopdrachten, het sorteren van afval, het toepassen van moderne airconditioningsystemen. Vanaf 2008 zal BASE nog een aantal concrete acties ondernemen om beter tegemoet te komen aan het milieu: de plastic koffiebekertjes worden vervangen en BASE zal deelnemen aan de “Dikke Truiendag” (één dag wordt de verwarming een paar graden lager gedraaid).

Het verminderen van de maandelijks papierberg

« Gezien we weten dat de Belg gemiddeld 340 kilo papier per jaar verbruikt, ging BASE op zoek naar manieren om een steentje bij te dragen tot het beschermen van het leefmilieu. BASE wil haar klanten stimuleren om het papierverbruik te verminderen via één simpele opdracht: het consulteren van de facturen online », verklaart Bart Vandesompele, woordvoerder van BASE. Om dit project te verwezenlijken heeft BASE een samenwerking tot stand gebracht met Natuurpunt en Natagora, twee Belgische milieueen organisaties.
Elk jaar verstuurt BASE 15 miljoen pagina's in 4,5 miljoen omslagen naar haar klanten. Vanaf 3 december, de dag waarop in Bali de Conferentie van de klimaatsveranderingen van de Verenigde Naties plaatsvindt, nodigt BASE haar klanten uit om te opteren voor de facturatie online. De klanten kunnen op die manier een concreet project voor de bescherming van het leefmilieu in België uitkiezen.

**Jack zorgt voor onze natuur**


Elk trimester zal Jack op zoek gaan naar nieuwe opdrachten in samenwerking met Natuurpunt en Natagora.

Zo draagt BASE, samen met de hulp van haar klanten, haar steentje bij tot de bescherming van het leefmilieu, in jouw buurt, want ook in jouw omgeving zijn de fauna en flora in gevaar.

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Met 73.000 gezinnen als lid en 16.000 hectare natuur in beheer is Natuurpunt veruit de grootste natuurvereniging in Vlaanderen en Brussel. Natuurpunt koopt natuurgebieden aan en ijvert voor het behoud van gave landschappen. Onder het motto 'Natuur voor Iedereen' stellen we onze terreinen maximaal open voor wandelaars, fietsers en andere recreanten. Ook in jouw buurt zetten we ons in voor een kwaliteitsvolle leefomgeving! [www.natuurpunt.be](http://www.natuurpunt.be)

Het doel van de vereniging Natagora is de bescherming van de natuur, en meer bepaald in Wallonië en Brussel. Haar voornaamste doelstelling: de teloorgang van de biodiversiteit stopzetten en beetje bij beetje gezonde algemene toestand van de natuur herstellen, in evenwicht met menselijke activiteiten. Natagora heeft dankzij programma's voor de follow-up van soorten en het herstel van zeldzame omgevingen al meer dan 4.000 hectare uitzonderlijk natuurgebied beschermd. Het organiseert ook kennismakingsbezoeken en wandelingen in natuurlijk erfgoedgebied, animatie voor kinderen, en ontwikkelt partnerships met andere verenigingen voor projecten van collectief belang (opwarming van de aarde, ...).

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BASE n.v./s.a. is a 100% subsidiary of Koninklijke KPN N.V. KPN offers mobile voice and data services in Germany (E-Plus), Belgium (BASE) and the Netherlands (KPN, Hi and Telfort). At the end of September 2007, BASE had 543 employees and a market share in number of customers of ca. 23%. In 2006, BASE had a yearly
turnover of 622 million euros. The company’s headquarters are in Brussels; it positions itself as an innovator in products and services via a segmented approach.

For further information, please contact:
BASE
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Persbericht
5 maart 2008

BASE Standard:
De mobiele aanbieding voor alle Standard supporters!

BASE, hoofdsponsor van Standard de Liège, ontwikkelt een mobiel product in de kleuren van Standard.

Als mobiele operator wou BASE Standard de Liège een voorstel aanbieden om de supporters nog dichter bij hun favoriete club te brengen.

BASE en Standard de Liège : een partnership tussen twee challengers
Het verhaal van BASE bij Standard begon zo’n 4 jaar geleden met het sponsoren van alle jeugdelftallen. BASE groeide verder op de Belgische markt en volgde nauwgezet de evolutie van zijn partner, die zich eveneens profileerde als challenger en winnaar.
In 2007 werd BASE hoofdsponsor van Standard en bevestigde hiermee tevens een hoofdrol te willen spelen in Wallonië. BASE volgde de jonge jeugdspelers zoals Witsel en Fellaini naar het eerste elftal.

BASE Standard : meer dan zomaar een mobiel product
BASE Standard bestaat uit een abonnement voor alle Standard supporters tegen voordelige prijs met een belwaarde van 10€ per maand. Daarenboven krijgt de abonnee 600 belminuten gratis naar BASE en BASE Standard, van vrijdag 18.00 u tot middernacht op zondag. Een weekend de tijd dus om de emoties van de voorbije matchen te delen met vrienden en fans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Oproepen naar BASE (per minuut)</th>
<th>0,15€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oproepen naar alle andere Belgische netwerken (vast &amp; mobiel)</td>
<td>0,20€</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS naar alle Belgische mobiele netwerken (per SMS)</td>
<td>0,10€</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

De abonnee betaalt geen abonnementskost en geen activatie kost. De tarieven blijven ongewijzigd, ook nadat de belwaarde is opgebruikt. BASE stelt een tarief voor dat gelijkvallig is aan zijn klassiek tarief, gekenmerkt door transparantie en eenvoud. Geen onaangenamer verrassingen dus.

Het BASE Standard tarief werd ontworpen op basis van de beste BASE tarief formule, die eveneens erkend werd door een consumentenmagazine als deel uitmakend van de meest voordelige op de markt.

Maar BASE Standard is voor alles een manier om per sms alle informatie over Standard de Liège te krijgen. Tot 6 keer per week wordt de abonnee, dankzij Standard News, per SMS op de hoogte gehouden van het officiële clubnieuws en de essentiële informatie over de wedstrijden.
Deze service is geheel gratis voor alle BASE Standard abonnees en betalend voor een niet BASE klant.

Daarenboven wordt de supporters de keuze geboden tussen twee GSM’s met het Club logo en foto’s van de spelers.

BASE Standard zal beschikbaar zijn in “Planète Rouge” de fan shop van Standard, in alle BASE shops en ALLO telecom shops in het Luikse.

**BASE Standard : een aanbieding die verder blijft evolueren**

Het uiteindelijke doel is een gemeenschap te creëren rond Standard de Liège, een “club” BASE Standard, waar alle gebruikers kunnen genieten van bijkomende voordelen. BASE Standard zal inhoudelijk verder evolueren (korte video filmpjes, het live volgen van de wedstrijden, deelname aan spelletjes & wedstrijden) en speciale acties lanceren (voordeel producten verbonden aan de uitslagen, door de spelers ingesproken berichten, nieuwe screensavers en beltonen).

**Steen aan Standard**
Supporters die BASE Standard worden steunen daarenboven ook hun favoriete club, want bij iedere aankoop van een BASE Standard SIM kaart of een GSM uit het gamma ontvangt Standard de Liège van BASE een belangrijke extra bijdrage. Volledig in lijn zijn strategie, verstevigt BASE hiermee de sponsoring en versterkt het partnership tussen BASE en Standard.


BASE n.v./s.a. is een 100% dochterbedrijf van KPN Mobiel N.V., de mobiele divisie van Koninklijke KPN N.V. KPN biedt mobiel spraak en data diensten aan in Duitsland (E-Plus), België (BASE) en Nederland (KPN, Hi en Telfort). Op het einde van 2007, had BASE 535 mensen in dienst, en een marktaandeel in klanten van ca. 23%. In 2007 had BASE een jaaromzet van 613 miljoen euro. Het bedrijf heeft zijn hoofdzetel in Brussel en positioneert zich als innovator in producten en diensten via een gesegmenteerde aanpak.

**Voor verdere informatie:**
BASE
Bart Vandesompele
E-mail: bart.vandesompele@base.be
3 Group, KPN Group and Play Move to Bring Down Data Roaming Prices

- 25 Euro cents per megabyte wholesale deal challenges Europe’s operators to support Europe’s rapidly growing market for data roaming; 25 cent is one fourth of the lowest current available wholesale price in Europe;

- KPN, and its subsidiaries BASE and E-Plus, join 3 Group and Play to push down wholesale data roaming prices across 10 markets with over 295 million consumers

Five mobile operators with networks covering 10 European markets and a population of more than 295 million – 60 per cent of the European Union’s total 495 million – have today accepted the challenge set by the European Commission to push for better value data roaming for customers.

KPN in the Netherlands, Belgian operator BASE and German operator E-Plus have joined Play in Poland and 3 in the UK, Italy, Ireland, Austria, Sweden and Denmark to agree a wholesale rate of €0.25 (18.6 UK pence at today’s rates) per MB of data downloaded. The new wholesale price will be introduced by the five initial participants on 1 March 2008.

In order for customers across the EU to benefit from the potential this offers to reduce retail prices, the five operators have challenged other operators across Europe to join them by also bringing down their wholesale rates. With the European average retail roaming rate currently at €5.24 per MB, this could lead to significant reductions in retail prices across the EU.

“This will allow us to pass on the significant savings achieved through a simple, transparent and competitive wholesale tariff to our customers across the EU,” said Stan Miller, President and CEO of KPN Mobile Group. “Our companies in Germany and Belgium have supported the initiatives of Mrs Reding to make mobile telephony affordable. Voice roaming was one example. Now it’s time to support the demand for data roaming across the EU. This deal is a start. It reaches across 10 countries. We hope that other operators in more markets will act too.”

Consumers across Europe are still fearful of using their phones and laptops to access data via mobile networks abroad as they are concerned they will be charged exorbitant prices for the same simple and increasingly inexpensive tasks they are now used to at home.
According to Christian Salbaing, MD European Telecommunications for Hutchison 3G Europe, wholesale data pricing must be brought more consistently in line with the cost of providing the data. “Simple and transparent wholesale pricing will enable competition to establish more consumer-friendly offers right across the EU.”

“Our move on wholesale prices is intended to be a concrete step to bringing fairly-priced data roaming to Europe. We believe the benefit to consumers will be a move away from inflated per-event based prices to charging on a more consistent flat-rate subscription-based model which is what we are all now used to experiencing with the internet,” he adds.

National regulators and the European Commission have called for the industry to act to end excessive prices, promising action at the regulatory level should the market fail to deliver. This deal is designed to kick-start inexpensive mobile internet access for roamers across Europe.

Chris Bannister, CEO of Play commented: “In 2007, Play was the first to move to reducing voice pricing across Europe. 2008 will be the year when the participants in this initiative will change the rules for data usage making Mobile Broadband truly mobile. I hope all major European players will join this initiative, so that all European consumers can enjoy the benefits of mobile Internet access without fear of being ripped off when they get their bill.”

Mobile broadband is becoming an everyday reality for consumers in their home markets, yet current retail data roaming prices for consumers travelling elsewhere in Europe can easily be 50-times the level offered by their operator at home.

“When customers travel to parts of Europe not served by their home network provider, they risk massive bills for simply browsing the web or accessing their email over the mobile network,” said Mr Bannister.

ENDS

In Belgium:

Bart Vandesompele, bart.vandesompele@base.be,

For Background:

About KPN Mobiel, BASE and E-Plus

BASE n.v./s.a. is a 100% subsidiary of KPN Mobiel N.V., the mobile division of Koninklijke KPN N.V. KPN offers mobile voice and data services in Germany (E-Plus), Belgium (BASE) and the Netherlands (KPN, Hi and
Telfort). At the end of 2007, BASE had 535 employees and a market share in number of customers of more than 23%. In 2007, BASE had a yearly turnover of 613 million euros. The company’s headquarters are in Brussels; it positions itself as a challenger and an innovator in products and services via a segmented approach.

With 15 million customers the E-Plus Group is the third-largest mobile network operator in Germany and a member of the KPN Group. The company has been the fastest and most profitable growing provider in the German market in 2006 and 2007. With the launch of brands like BASE, simyo, Ay Yildiz and vybemobile the company has developed from a single brand to a brand group. Further partnerships with successful companies from other industries strengthen the sales strategy. These new initiatives have gathered more than 7.6 million customers since summer 2005. The company has 2,200 employees in Germany and achieves annual revenues of 3 billion euros.

About 3 Group

A division of Hutchison Whampoa, the 3 Group together with Hutchison Telecommunications International Limited, is the leading global player in the 3G arena, holding licences in 11 markets with total population coverage of approximately 175 million.

In each of its markets the 3 Group has built an entirely new mobile broadband network, achieving probably the fastest rollout of a radio network in the entire telecom industry. Marketed globally under the 3 brand, the 3 Group was the first operator in the world to provide dual-mode 3G services.

About Play

Play is a leading operator of 3G broadband mobile network in Poland. The company is jointly owned by Novator Telecom Poland (53,4%), Netia S.A. (23,4%) and Tollerton Investments (22%). In its first 10 months of commercial operation Play attracted over 1 mln of customers offering attractively priced innovative services. Play was also the first operator in Europe to launch roaming Eurotariff to all of its customers.
Brussel, 28 april 2008 – Naar aanleiding van de klacht van Belgacom dat Belgacom klanten die genieten van de sociale tarieven een “financiële last” vormen voor de Belgacom groep, doet BASE een voorstel aan Belgacom om deze klanten over te nemen. Belgacom heeft zich bereid verklaard daarover te praten met BASE.

BASE stelt ook vragen bij de door Belgacom aangekondigde prijsverhogingen die niet in lijn zijn met de dalende kosten voor (internationale) telefonie. BASE of haar zusterbedrijf Tele2 zullen ten laatste op 1 juli tarieven lanceren die een alternatief bieden voor de Belgacom producten zonder de aangekondigde prijsstijgingen.

Sociale tarieven
Op 19 december 2007 verklaarde Belgacom voor de Parlementaire Commissie Infrastructuur, Verkeer en Overheidsbedrijven dat de verplichting om een sociaal tarief aan te bieden een financiële last is voor Belgacom die mee zou moeten betaald worden door de andere operatoren (een verplichting die tot op heden niet uitgevoerd wordt o.a., omdat de Europese Commissie België gedagvaard heeft voor het Europese Hof van Justitie omdat de betalingsverplichting bepaald in de wet vooral Belgacom bevoordeelt).

Wellicht voldoen deze klanten niet aan de voorwaarden die Belgacom heeft vastgelegd qua winstgevendheid. BASE daarentegen heeft een strategie die erop gericht is te groeien door communicatie in België betaalbaar te maken voor iedereen. Daarom heeft BASE Belgacom een aanbod gedaan om hen te verlossen van deze financiële last door de klanten die genieten van een sociaal tarief over te nemen van Belgacom. De overstap naar BASE zal deze klanten bovendien het bijkomend voordeel van mobiliteit bieden.

Belgacom verhoogt zijn tarieven, BASE biedt alternatief
Belgacom heeft aangekondigd dat het op 1 juli aanstaande haar tarieven voor nationaal en internationaal bellen met gemiddeld 3% zal verhogen. BASE en haar zusterbedrijf Tele2 hebben nu reeds tarieven die meer dan competitief zijn met de Belgacom tarieven. Zo kan je internationaal bellen via Tele2 vanaf 7 cent. Bovendien zullen zij ten laatste op 1 juli 2008, datum waarop Belgacom zijn tarieven verhoogt, nieuwe tarieven op de markt brengen die de Belgacom klanten een alternatief zullen bieden voor de huidige Belgacom tarieven zonder prijsverhoging.

Dit is mogelijk omdat BASE van mening is dat de door Belgacom aangekondigde algemene prijsverhoging (reeds de tweede verhoging in 18 maanden) niet beantwoordt aan een reële stijging van enige kosten. Integendeel, over het algemeen dalen de groothandelsprijzen voor telefonie. Zo zijn bijvoorbeeld de groothandelsprijzen voor internationale telefonie (waarvan Belgacom ook de prijs wil verhogen) de laatste maanden en jaren systematisch gedaald (zie de
bijgevoegde grafiek), waardoor de marges op dit verkeer reeds hoog zijn. De vraag stelt zich dan ook waarom Belgacom de tarieven voor eindgebruikers nog meer wil verhogen (volgens Datanews wil Belgacom voor bellen naar Frankrijk de prijs meer dan verdubbelen). Dit soort kunstmatige prijsverhogingen, niet gebaseerd op kostargumenten, zorgt ervoor dat de levensduurte en inflatie toeneemt. Zo stijgt de index en kan Belgacom binnenkort haar tarieven opnieuw “indexeren”.

Opvallend is dat Belgacom haar prijzen alleen verhoogt in markten waar er nog Weinig concurrentie rest in België zoals vaste telefonie en internationaal bellen, maar niet in markten waar ze hun marktaandeel willen vergroten zoals IPTV en breedband internet.

Dit soort kunstmatige prijsverhogingen, niet gebaseerd op kostargumenten, zorgt ervoor dat de levensduurte en inflatie toeneemt. Zo stijgt de index en kan Belgacom binnenkort haar tarieven opnieuw “indexeren”.

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BASE doet tarieven dalen

BASE n.v./s.a. is een 100% dochterbedrijf van KPN Mobiel N.V., de mobiele divisie van Koninklijke KPN N.V. KPN biedt mobiel spraak en data diensten aan in Duitsland (E-Plus), België (BASE) en Nederland (KPN, Hi en Telfort). Op het einde van maart 2008, had BASE 535 mensen in dienst, en een marktaandeel in klanten van ca. 24%. In 2007 had BASE een jaaromzet van 613 miljoen euro. Het bedrijf heeft zijn hoofdzetel in Brussel en positioneert zich als innovator in producten en diensten via een gesegmenteerde aanpak.

Voor meer informatie:
BASE, Bart Vandesompele
E-mail: bart.vandesompele@base.be
Evolutie van de groothandelsprijzen voor internationaal bellen
(voorbeeld voor Frankrijk, de evolutie is ongeveer hetzelfde voor alle landen, met name een dalende trend)

Routing cost to France mobile networks - Blended

Carrier 2 per minute charge to Mobile — Carrier 1 per minute charge — Linear (Carrier 2 per minute charge to Mobile)
KPN Senior Executive: “Belgians will soon pay the price for lack of government vision on telecoms”

Brussels, January 10th, 2008 – Marcel Smits, CFO (Chief Financial Officer) of the Dutch telecom operator KPN, warned today of the consequences of a competition-unfriendly Belgian telecom market. The Senior Executive of KPN, mother company of BASE and Tele2, points out the huge advantages free competition offers consumers, such as more freedom of choice and lower prices. He summarized the situation in Belgium as follows:

- The BIPT discriminates to the disadvantage of consumers
- Current legislation hinders competition in Belgium
- Belgacom is ensnared in the past and therefore hinders free competition
- What is Belgium’s telecom policy vision or do we simply want to return to RTT?
- Telecom bills will soon become more expensive

According to the Dutch senior executive, recent decisions by the Belgian government (or lack thereof) relating to construction of the UMTS network and termination rates (MTR) hinder free competition as they consistently favour Belgacom and weaken new competitors. Marcel Smits furthermore asks questions about the particularly rigid attitude of Belgacom in certain domains, such as the opening of their (VDSL) network to other players in the market or even simply engaging in debate with the other players or the BIPT. While other scenarios are possible, as ex-monopolist KPN has proven in the Netherlands as a result of powerful competition and the role of a strong regulator, OPTA.

Other scenarios are possible

KPN, which has the same position in the Netherlands as Belgacom in Belgium, has for years presented itself as “modern incumbent” (modern ex-monopolist) and has established that operating in that way offers many more advantages to KPN and to consumers. The Dutch government no longer has a share in KPN, allowing the company to set different priorities, such as more focus on technological innovation, sharper prices and international expansion. With it, the main shareholder of BASE maintains a policy of openness, giving free entry to a network of competitors and thus offering a myriad of advantages to consumers. Everyone wins.

“The European telecom market is developing rapidly. KPN sees huge growth potential for new players willing to challenge ex-monopolists” says Marcel Smits. “BASE and Tele2 are real examples of such challengers that have unquestionably ensured more freedom of choice and lower prices in Belgium. This is partially due to the fact that they can sail an independent course. We have unfortunately concluded that numerous local authorities in Europe, including Belgium, still view this as a threat and want to protect their market as much as possible. According to KPN, this is at the expense of consumers, who have less freedom of choice and also pay too much. In times when purchasing power is under pressure, we argue for an open approach.”
Everyone loses

The BIPT lacks nerve in drafting legislation advantageous to consumers. It yields to the will of the European Commission, which does not have the interests of the Belgian consumer as its first priority. The Commission favours consolidation, i.e. dividing the European pie among 3 or 4 large operators. Current Belgian law will only lead to losers in the long term. Protecting national operator Belgacom does however make the company stronger financially, which in turn will make it an interesting take-over target for foreign investors, who, with its current lack of future vision, will regard the company as nothing more than a financial operation, with all the consequences thereof. It becomes immediately apparent why Belgian consumers continue to pay too much in comparison with surrounding countries. Life is made difficult for businesses such as BASE and Tele2, who want to promote competition by making prices more attractive.

Everything comes back to a lack of vision on the part of the government and the BIPT. The telecom sector is an engine of the Belgian economy and deserves due attention from policy makers. What is our objective in the Belgian telecom market? How can Belgian politicians carry on explaining to their electorate why they have been paying too much for years and that it will quite possibly get worse?

Things could be different, however. The example of KPN in the Netherlands as well as BT in the UK and other European countries (quite possibly the most strictly regulated incumbents) show that strict legislation has encouraged national operator businesses to grow and has also resulted in consumer advantage.

These problems also exist in other European countries. In order to improve competition in the European mobile telecom market, last year KPN launched the Mobile Challengers Group, an alliance of European “Challengers” which asks governments and ex-monopolists in Europe to grant fair opportunities for competition. The alliance currently represents 8 operators in 11 countries, counting 60 million customers (further information: www.mobilechallengers.eu).
BASE organiseert vierde editie van de sms-poëziewedstrijd in Gent


De vierde editie van deze wedstrijd in Gent, draait rond het betoverende thema ‘1001 nacht’. Elke gsm-gebruiker kan deelnemen door een Nederlandstalig, creatief en origineel sms-gedichtje met maximaal 160 karakters te sturen naar 3264 (30 cent per sms). Je ontvangt vervolgens een retour-sms om je deelname te bevestigen. Laat je meeslepen met het magische thema en stuur een origineel sms-gedichtje de wereld in!

Uit alle ingezonden berichten zal de jury, samengesteld uit professionele dichters en medewerkers van de organisatoren, de beste sms’jes selecteren. De schrijver van het winnende gedicht wordt beloond met een exotische reis die past binnen het thema. De andere laureaten vallen in de prijzen (zoals gsm’s, boeken, concerttickets, …) en hun gedichten zullen gebundeld worden in een poëzie-uitgave. Deze bloemlezing zal nadien gratis verkrijgbaar zijn op alle concerten van het Internationale Festival van Vlaanderen Gent 2008. De winnaars worden tevens uitgenodigd op 13 september 2008 voor de bekendmaking en overhandiging van de prijzen in het Stadhuis te Gent.

Verdere informatie en een wedstrijdreglement zijn terug te vinden op www.smspoëzie.be en www.BASE.be.

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Vierde editie
sms-poëziewedstrijd
in Gent
van 6 mei tot 30 juni 08

Thema: ‘1001 nacht’

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Laat je meeslepen met het magische thema en stuur een origineel gedicht de wereld in!
wat te vieren viel aan scherven.
het glas waarmee u zo feestelijk
aan het vergeten ging
en de lipafdruk erop,
die ook mij niet heel liet.

winnende gedicht 2007,
van Regis Dragonetti