SCRIPTIE

STAGE BIJ OPEN BEDRIJVENDAG

27 april tot 16 juni 2009

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bedrijf</th>
<th>stagebegeleider</th>
<th>afdeling</th>
<th>taken</th>
<th>talen tijdens de stage</th>
<th>stageperiode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| OPEN BEDRIJVEN VZW   | Eva D’hondt     |          | - SPSS-verwerking en interpretatie gegevens bezoekers enquête Open Bedrijvendag 2008 en verbetersuggesties  
- Project “Hoe Open Bedrijvendag aantrekkelijker maken voor jongeren?”  
- Telefonische opvolging en begeleiding van klanten bij aanmaak drukwerken  
- Assistentie infosessie, adviesmeeting en workshop | NL                      | 27/04/2009 - 16/06/2009 |
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Word of thanks

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to my trainee supervisor, Eva D’hondt, for giving me the opportunity to gain a first experience in the field of event organizing and to be part of the Open Company Day team. I also would like to thank Ann Van Doren, the organizer of Open Company Day, who assisted with the focus groups and who assigned an hour of her time to answer all my questions about the organization.

Furthermore, I would like to express my appreciation to Luc De Bie, for his advice and guidance throughout the year.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank my parents, who gave me the chance to complete this subsequent master program, and my fellow students and house-mates in Ghent, who made this year an unforgettable experience.
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Preface

Over the past year, MTB has allowed me to gain some practical experience in very different domains: market research, crisis communication, sales, advertising, HR etc. It was not easy to choose just one domain in which to do my work placement. So I decided to work for Open Bedrijven, as this organization offered a work placement with a lot of variety in job responsibilities.

One task consisted of the analysis and interpretation of the visitor questionnaires, that were filled in after the Open Company Day of 2008. As a psychologist, consumer behaviour has always interested me and during my education I followed several statistics courses. Therefore, this task seemed just the thing for me.

Moreover, I had the opportunity to participate in the realisation of a communication plan aimed at schools. Being a young person myself, I saw it as a real challenge to arouse youngsters’ interest in Open Company Day and get them up out of their lazy chairs on Sunday.

Furthermore, I was able to attend sales presentations and workshops for participating companies to make their Open Company Day a memorable experience. This was an ideal opportunity for me to learn more about the art of selling and to gather some creative ideas. I could also put my writing skills into practice, seeing that copywriting was mentioned in the job description.

I liked the fact that there was client contact involved as well. Being a patient person who likes to help people, the follow-up and guidance of clients with their prints, such as Open Company Day brochures, invitations, etc. seemed very rewarding.

Finally, the size and the general concept of Open Company Day appealed to me: it is the largest one-day event in Flanders, on which more than 400 companies allow 800,000 visitors to take a look behind the scenes.

I sent my CV to Open Bedrijven and two other companies in the event organizing business: Clockwork and DM&S NV. However, the job descriptions of these last two work placements seemed to be somewhat less varied. A couple of weeks later I could go to Open Bedrijven for an interview with my trainee supervisor, Eva d’hondt. The interview went well and as it turned out, the other two companies had already found an intern, so the choice for Open Bedrijven was quite obvious.
1. About Open Bedrijven

Open Bedrijven is a non-profit organization in the event organizing business with just one mission: the organization of Open Company Day, the largest one-day event in Flanders. On that day, each year the first Sunday of October, more than 400 companies open their doors to the general public. This way, 800.000 visitors can take a look behind the scenes of their favorite brands.

To obtain some additional information about Open Company Day, I interviewed the business unit manager of the organization: Ann Van Doren. My trainee supervisor, Eva D’hondt, also told me a lot about the company. The following description is based on their comments, my own observations and information from the Open Company Day website.

1.1. A short history

It was Yves Lejaeghere who came up with the idea of Open Company Day. In the 1980’s the company Dow Chemicals asked Yves’ advertising agency Calisto to organize an open house day for them. Seeing that it was enormous success, Yves started to think about an event with several companies opening their doors at the same time.

So he tried to convince as many companies as he could to take part in Open Company Day. This was not an easy task. Yves had trouble finding enough participants. Just when he was about to throw in the towel, he received a fax from Sabena, saying that they wanted to participate. That gave him new heart.

After two whole years of work, the first edition of Open Company Day eventually took place in 1991. Thanks to the support of the BRTN and some well-known participants such as Sabena and Douwe Egberts, the event got a lot of publicity.

A couple of years later Yves launched Open Company Day in Wallonia and in the Brussels-Capital Region. In Wallonia he decided to go with a franchising formula. The Open Company Day in Brussels-Capital Region was organized by the office in Flanders.

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Furthermore, Yves assisted with the organization of Open Company Days in the Netherlands, in Luxemburg and in the French Champagne region. However, these initiatives were buried later due to the lack of industry and/or control possibilities in these countries.

In 2003 Yves stepped down to work full-time as the president of K.V. Oostende. Ann Van Doren took over his job as organizer. Next year, Ann and her team will celebrate the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Open Company Day. In 20 years time, the event has not stopped growing, both in number of participating companies and in number of visitors. As you can see in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the event has grown from a modest event with 50 companies and 150,000 visitors into the largest one-day event in Flanders with more than 400 companies and 800,000 visitors.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Number of participating companies in Flanders (1991-2008)\textsuperscript{2}}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure2.png}
\caption{Number of visitors in Flanders in thousands (1991-2008)\textsuperscript{3}}
\end{figure}

\subsection{1.2. Structure of the company}

Open Bedrijven is a small non-profit company with 18 employees who work full-time on the organization of Open Company Day in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. There is also an Open Company Day in Wallonia (“Journée Découverte Entreprises”), but it is organized independently from the office in Flanders. This company is a franchise: it can use the Open Company Day trademark in exchange for a fee. Sometimes Ann meets with the organizers in Wallonia to give them advice, or to ask their opinion about a new house style. Other than


\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.
that, there is little cooperation. They make their own decisions and they have separate campaigns.

Roughly put, there are two main departments in Open Bedrijven: one department takes care of the project coordination and the other one handles the sales. The former is responsible for the invoices, keeping the website up to date, the logistics, the material orders and the follow-up of the printed matter such as Open Company Day posters, invitations, the Open Company Day magazine etc. They also perform the function of a helpdesk and provide support for the press campaign.

The sales team is in charge of convincing companies to participate in Open Company Day: they are responsible for database management, telephone prospection, mailings, info sessions for interested companies etc.

There are 4 account managers on the sales team. Each account manager is responsible for one or two Flemish provinces.

The project coordination team and the sales team work together on advice meetings and workshops, where participating companies receive practical information and tips about how to make their Open Company Day an unforgettable experience.

The organigram of Open Bedrijven is displayed in Figure 3.
1.3. **Corporate identity**

1.3.1. **Mission statement, vision and strategy**

Open Bedrijven does not have an official mission statement or vision (yet). Their strategy is to just slowly keep on growing. In total there are some 400,000 companies in Flanders of which approximately 5,000 have already taken part in Open Company Day over the past 20 years. Consequently, there is still a lot of growth margin, but the effect of the financial crisis has yet to be seen. Against all expectations, the crisis has had little effect on the company this year. It seems that the number of participating companies will remain status quo. However, it might be that the true effect of the crisis will not reveal itself until next year. By
then, companies will have assessed the exact impact of the crisis on their finances and might decide to drop Open Company Day from their budget.

1.3.2. Corporate culture

Open Bedrijven has no officially defined corporate values, so I will try and describe the corporate culture based on my own observations. According to me, the organization has, what organizational researchers Kabanoff and Holt would call, a “meritocratic value system”\(^4\). Companies with a meritocratic value system endorse the values teamwork, participation, commitment, affiliation and performance rewards. Authority is discouraged.

During my work placement it struck me that the organization does not have a strict hierarchy. All the employees are on a first-name basis, they do not have separate offices and the doors are always open. They are always prepared to answer questions and appreciate new ideas. The project coordination team and the sales team complete each other and work together on advice meetings and workshops. Both teams receive performance bonuses based on the sales they make or on their performance evaluation. It is clear that the personnel is committed to the company, as most of them have been working for Open Bedrijven for several years now.

1.4. Customers

Open Bedrijven has two different types of customers to satisfy: companies and visitors. In this section these two customer types will be discussed separately: who are they and how does Open Bedrijven appeal to them?

1.4.1. **Companies**

1.4.1.1. **Profile**

Open Company Day is most popular in Flanders. Last year a record was achieved with 438 participating companies in the Flanders region. In Wallonia 115 companies joined in. About 40 companies participated in the Brussels-Capital Region.

There are no restrictions as to which companies can take part in Open Company Day. Every company can participate as long as they have something interesting to show to the visitors.

The majority of participating companies are small organizations. This is no surprise as more than 90% of the Flemish companies has less than 50 employees. Actually, if we look at it proportionally, more large than small companies take part in Open Company Day. The exact percentages are displayed in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Size of the participating companies in Flanders**

![Size of the participating companies in Flanders](image)

Apart from size, participating companies also vary when it comes to sector and products (Figure 5). They are a reflection of the economic activity in Flanders. In the years to come, Open Bedrijven expects a decline in production companies, as production is increasingly being shifted to low-wage countries. These companies always attract lots of visitors.

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It will be a challenge for Open Bedrijven to make other companies just as attractive to maintain the number of visitors.

**Figure 5: Sectors of the participating companies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alimentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Companies can enroll individually or in group with a municipality, a business park or a federation, such as Ovam. If they enter in group, they generally get a discount and an additional promotional package, as will be explained later.

1.4.1.2. **Marketing**

To sell Open Company Day to organizations the sales team highlights 6 benefits:

1. **Increase in notoriety** of the company: Open Company Day gets a lot of publicity. Visitors can get to know the company and spread the word.

2. **Personnel motivation**: the employees get a chance to show friends and family what they do.

3. **Recruitment of new employees**: interested candidates can come and take a look behind the scenes of the company. Open Bedrijven also offers a “Find your job” package with application forms etc., so candidates can even apply on the spot.

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4. **Strengthening of business relationships**: clients can get to know the company in a more informal way.

5. **Raise of sales**: Open Company Day gives companies the opportunity to present their products/services to the general public. Companies can also set up a sales stand to retrieve their entrance fee.

6. **Strengthening of community relations**: Clarifying the activities of the company to the neighborhood creates goodwill.

Before contacting a company, the sales team thinks about these 6 benefits and tries to discover the needs of that company: “Is it an organization in a sector that has trouble finding new employees?”, “Is it a company that is not well-known with the general public?” etc. The sales team then sends a letter to the company aimed at their specific needs. A little while later a member of the team calls the company to see if it is interested and tries to convince them. If they want to participate, they can find the enrollment form online.

However, companies can also participate in group.

In the case of a municipal action, several companies in one municipality open their doors together. First, Open Bedrijven contacts the municipality and tries to get them on board. If they are interested, they send a letter to all the companies in the municipality inviting them to an information session. On that session they try to convince the companies, by underlining the extra benefits of a group action: more visitors, more press coverage, an extra promotional package and a discount on the entrance fee.

For federation actions and business park actions, Open Bedrijven follows a similar procedure: they try to find one interested company who can try to convince the others to participate.
1.4.2. **Visitors**

1.4.2.1. **Profile**

As we can derive from Figure 6, Open Company Day is a family event. Most visitors go to Open Company Day with their partners, their children or other family members. The average visitor is slightly older and the event is less popular among youngsters aged 14 to 22\(^8\).

![Figure 6: Companions on Open Company Day\(^9\)](image)

1.4.2.2. **Marketing**

An extensive media campaign is held to arouse the visitors’ interest. This campaign comprises a TV spot on Eén, a radio spot on Radio 2 and ads in Het Nieuwsblad, De Streekkrant and De Zondag. There is a policy at Open Bedrijven to never pay for publicity. Media coverage is exchanged for their logo on the Open Company Day website, brochures etc.

\(^8\) Open Bedrijvendag (2009). *Open Bedrijvendag-enquête 2009.*

Furthermore, Open Bedrijven writes press releases and each edition of Open Company Day has its own theme to get even more press coverage. For the edition of 2009 they have chosen the theme “social economy”.

Open Company Day is also promoted through the Open Bedrijven website and the websites of the participating companies.

Finally, flags, banners and posters are hung up in train stations, along the freeway, in participating companies etc. to attract the public’s attention.

1.5. **Services**

Open Bedrijven offers companies an all-in package, based on three pillars:

1. Professional advice and guidance
2. Organizational and promotional materials
3. A comprehensive media campaign

The exact content and the price of the package depends on the number of employees. The package is slightly different for individual companies and companies that participate with a municipality, a federation or a business park.

1.5.1. **Individual companies**

In Table 1 you can find the content of the Open Company Day package and the entrance fees for companies according to their number of employees.
Table 1: Content of the Open Company Day package and entrance fees for companies according to their number of employees.\(^\text{10}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-49</th>
<th>50-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200-499</th>
<th>&gt; 499</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND GUIDANCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital work folder</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with checklists, progressive scheme, information and tips.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice meeting: during this meeting participants get information about the prints and the materials. They also get to meet other participating companies.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop: tips and brainstorm session with other participating companies to make Open Company Day an unforgettable experience for the visitors.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice visit: the account manager visits the company to help them, among other things, with the outline of the visitor tour.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpdesk – Open Company Day team: a team of experienced project coordinators to answer all questions.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice about how to approach the press: tips and a press contact list to promote the company.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{10}\) Open Bedrijvendag (2008). *Brochure met prijzen*. 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of employees</th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-49</th>
<th>50-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200-499</th>
<th>&gt; 499</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized invitations for customers and clients to invite customers, suppliers and prospects.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized invitations for the personnel so they can invite family and friends to visit their company.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>2250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized email invitations so companies can launch their own campaign.</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized posters for local promotion.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalized company brochures with more information about the company.</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter stickers to promote Open Company Day through the company’s correspondence.</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flags to present Open Company Day in a festive way</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banner (6x1m) to announce Open Company Day.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>200-499</td>
<td>&gt; 499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
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<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Banner (6x2m)</strong> to announce Open Company Day even more majestically.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Signposts</strong> to lead the visitors to and through the company.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rope</strong> to mark out the visitor track.</td>
<td>250m</td>
<td>250m</td>
<td>500m</td>
<td>500m</td>
<td>750m</td>
<td>1000m</td>
<td>1250m</td>
<td>1500m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information panels</strong> to hang up information alongside the visitor track.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>T-shirts</strong> according to the number of employees that works on Open Company Day.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Find your job” package</strong>: banners and application forms for the recruitment new employees.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**A COMPREHENSIVE MEDIA CAMPAIGN**

**Individual profiling**

**Presentation of the company in 4 lines** in the Open Company Day magazine of the province of the company:

Contact information of the company with the logo and a short text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1-4</th>
<th>5-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-49</th>
<th>50-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200-499</th>
<th>&gt; 499</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual profiling</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>200-499</td>
<td>&gt; 499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of the company in 1 line</strong> in the general Open Company Day magazine in Flanders: contact information of the company with the logo and the slogan.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of the company on the Open Company Day website</strong>: contact information of the company with the logo, a short text and possible vacancies.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Link to the company website.</strong></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of the company in 1 line</strong> in De Streekkrant.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Presentation of the company in 1 line</strong> in De Zondag.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General campaign</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Open Company Day magazine</strong>: 360.000 free copies with Het Nieuwsblad, 40.000 copies in town halls and through B2B.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TV spots</strong>: a campaign on Eén and on regional channels.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Radio spots</strong>: a campaign on Radio 2.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>20-49</td>
<td>50-99</td>
<td>100-199</td>
<td>200-499</td>
<td>&gt; 499</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion in the written press: campaigns in Het Nieuwsblad, De Streekkrant and De Zondag.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Open Company Day website attracts a lot of visitors in the weeks before the event.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRICES (21% VAT excluded)</td>
<td>€2.100</td>
<td>€3.200</td>
<td>€4.200</td>
<td>€5.300</td>
<td>€6400</td>
<td>€8.500</td>
<td>€10.800</td>
<td>€11.900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.5.2. **Federations**

The Open Company Day package for federations is the same as that of individual companies, but they get a few extras. If at least 10 members of the federation take part in Open Company Day, they get a discount of 10%. They are also entitled to special group invitations on which both the company and the federation are profiled. Furthermore, they receive an extra promotional package. They get a page in the Open Company Day magazine and an extra column on the Open Company Day website.

1.5.3. **Municipalities**

If several companies in one municipality take part in Open Company Day, they also get a discount. Moreover, they receive an extra promotional package with, among other things, circus panels and a group paper with a map of the municipality and more information about the participating companies. These papers are distributed among the inhabitants.

1.5.4. **Business parks**

If several companies in a business park join forces on Open Company Day they too receive an additional promotional package with extra banners etc. On top of that, their participation is made known to the neighbors through the distribution of a special paper with more information about the companies.

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1.6. **Competitors**

Open Bedrijven has no direct competitors. There are similar initiatives such as Open Monument Day, Heritage Day, Open Wharf Day, Flemish Harbor Day etc., but they are organized on different dates.

Open Bedrijven does have to compete indirectly with individual open house days. However, they distinguish themselves from this competition by four assets:\footnote{Open Bedrijvendag (2009). *Met één budget scoort u op zes vlakken.* Retrieved June 22, 2009, from http://openbedrijvendag.zita.be/pages/?menuId=70&contentId=448.}

1. **Less work**
   
The workload for companies is restricted to a minimum. The participants receive a professional all-in package and benefit from the company’s extensive experience.

2. **Less costs**
   
   Although the entrance fee might seem high, participants could not possibly put together the same package themselves for less money. Open Bedrijven can offer an attractive price because a lot of companies join in.

3. **More visitors**
   
   Hundreds of thousands of visitors attend Open Company Day, so the event attracts more visitors than a regular open house day. Moreover, these visitors are not only people living in the neighborhood; they come from all over the country.

4. **More press coverage**
   
   Thanks to the extensive media campaign the companies get more press coverage than on a regular open house day.
1.7. **SWOT analysis**

To recapitulate this chapter, we will go through the main strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of Open Bedrijven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Extensive notoriety</td>
<td>• Organized only once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong media partnerships</td>
<td>• Participating companies can damage the Open Company Day image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Client-oriented approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extensive all-in package at a matchless price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 20 years of experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loyal personnel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: SWOT analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Still a lot of growth margin</td>
<td>• Not appealing for youngsters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attract more youngsters</td>
<td>• Production companies are moved to low-wage countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 2 points out, Open Company Day has an extensive notoriety. Each year 800,000 visitors from all over the country come and take a look behind the scenes of more than 400 companies. Open Bedrijven is able to reach so many visitors due to the strong media partnerships with Eén, Radio 2, Het Nieuwsblad, De Streekkrant and De Zondag. The company does not pay for this publicity. In exchange, Open Bedrijven puts their logos in the Open Company Day brochure, on the Open Company Day website etc.
Furthermore, Open Bedrijven has a strong client-oriented approach: it anticipates the needs of the participating companies. Clients get an extensive all-in package they could not possibly put together themselves for the same price. They also benefit from the organization’s extensive experience. Finally, Open Bedrijven can count on loyal personnel. After all, most of the employees have been working for Open Bedrijven for several years now.

Nevertheless, Open Bedrijven also has some weaknesses. The company has just got one chance a year to make a good impression on the general public. Their image ultimately depends on factors they cannot fully control, such as the efforts of the participating companies, the weather etc.

There are still opportunities for Open Company Day to grow as an event. Only 5.000 of the 400.000 companies in Flanders have already taken part in Open Company Day over the past 20 years.

The event does not appeal to many youngsters at the moment. This is a threat, because the youngsters of today are the visitors of tomorrow. However, Open Bedrijven can try to turn this threat into an opportunity by anticipating youngsters’ needs and making Open Company Day more attractive for them.

The shift of production companies to low-wage countries poses another threat, as these companies are much frequented during Open Company Day. It will be a challenge to make other companies just as attractive for the visitors.

The company has not felt the impact of the financial crisis yet. However, it might be that the true effect of the crisis will not reveal itself until next year, when companies will have assessed the exact impact of the crisis on their finances.

Finally, Open Bedrijven experiences some competition from individual open house days. They attract less visitors and get fewer press coverage, but can be organized at a lower cost.
2. Youth marketing

During my work placement at Open Bedrijven I could participate in the realization of a communication plan aimed at youngsters. After all, visitor surveys from previous editions have revealed that Open Company Day does not attract a lot of youngsters. This communication plan was made up of three parts: communication to principals, parents and the youngsters themselves. Since I am a young person too, my supervisors thought the third component would be an ideal task for me. Consequently, I examined how we could make Open Company Day more appealing for youngsters, how our message should be composed and through which communication channels we could reach them. To obtain some background information for this research, I read several articles and a few books about youth marketing. This theoretical background will be discussed in this chapter. In the next chapter, I will dilate upon the project itself.

2.1. Defining youth

I will begin this chapter by trying to define the term “youth”. There are several terms and classification systems with regard to early life stages. Hoogervorst and Fieniee\(^\text{15}\) identify three stages in youth: “kids” (7 years and younger), “tweens” (8 to 12 years old) and “teens” (13 to 18 years old). Datamonitor\(^\text{16}\) makes a distinction between 3 phases in the life of a young adult: “teenagers” (14 to 17 years old), “students” (18 to 24 years old) and “newly employed” (between 18 and 24 and in their first year of employment). Another classification system\(^\text{17}\) gives an overall picture and combines these two.


It distinguishes 5 categories:

- **Kids**: 4 to 10 years old, who are in their first years of primary school.
- **Tweens**: 10 to 12 years old, in the last years of primary school. They are saying goodbye to their childhood days and to children’s brands.
- **Teens**: 12 to 14 years old, who are against narrow-mindedness.
- **Youngsters**: 14 to 16 years old, who want to be treated like adults.
- **Students**: who are in the last years of secondary school or who attend higher education.
- **Starters**: newly employed, in the first three years of their career.

Apart from these classification systems, youth is also divided into segments based on attitudes. The YoungMentality model\(^{18}\), for example, divides youngsters into 6 groups according to their values and motives.

- **Stay-at-home comfort seekers**: This group is pretty passive. They like to stay at home with their families and watch TV.
- **Enthusiastic explorers**: These youngsters like to try new things and they are always looking for excitement. They do not watch a lot of TV, but spend more time behind their computers.
- **Social adapters**: This group wants to be around other people. They make friends easily and are very flexible. Because they are more people-oriented, they do not use media as often as the other groups.
- **Recognition seekers**: They do not like to stand out of the crowd. This group is pretty insecure and just wants to fit in by wearing the right clothes etc.
- **Extravert status seekers**: These youngsters are very outgoing and status-oriented. They do not really like to explore new things. They just like to go out with their own friends, to places which they already know.
- **Self-willed idealists**: This group has a mind of its own and does not follow the masses. It likes to experiment and try new things.

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The term “youth” thus covers youngsters of different ages with different lifestyles. The fact that it is such a heterogeneous group makes it difficult for marketers to come up with a one-size-fits-all message.

However, this generation of youngsters, termed Generation Y, also has some characteristics in common. This group was born between 1982 and 2000\textsuperscript{19}. It does not have a lot of financial commitments. The majority of their income is spent on entertainment, travel and food. Whereas previous generations based their decisions on authority figures or data and facts, Generation Y is more likely to make a decision based on the influence of their peers. They greatly value quality friendships, family and community. Furthermore, they stress experiencing instead of learning. Generation Y also gets more influenced by visual media than previous generations. A study revealed that, when they were asked “what/who has a lot of influence on your thinking and behavior?”, one quarter of the influence in their lives comes from TV and movies. Finally, they are the Internet generation\textsuperscript{20}: the first generation to have a lifelong use of the world wide web. Research shows that they use the internet more to socialize, to download entertainment media and to look up information about a wider range of purposes than their predecessors.

2.2. Why are they an interesting target group?

Marketers have focused on the youth segment as early as the 1950’s. In this period several youth-oriented media, such as music, magazines, movies and fashion emerged in consequence of the baby boom and the increase in youth employment\textsuperscript{21}.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
There are three main reasons why this segment is still so popular with marketers after all these years. First of all, young people are the consumers of tomorrow. If youngsters are confronted with brands, this can generate brand preference and brand loyalty later in life. Scientific research by Zajonc, Gordon and Holyoak, and Mizerski has revealed that brand familiarity leads to brand liking.

Secondly, youngsters have an important say in family decisions. Parents want to make their children happy and take their wishes into account.

Finally, the youngsters of today have a lot more money to spend than previous generations. Teenagers approximately spend $150 billion per year globally. This does not even include the purchasing decisions on which they have an indirect influence. If we add up direct and indirect expenses, we come to a total purchasing/influencing power of $600 billion per year.

One could wonder how ethical it is to influence these kids’ minds just to make a huge profit out of them. After all, research has connected youth marketing with several problems, such as childhood obesity, materialism, eating disorders, violence and family stress. Some authors therefore believe that marketing to youth should be restricted. However, we should not underestimate the maturity of young consumers. The youngsters of today are more media savvy than previous generations. A study with 120 youngsters revealed that young consumers between 8.5 and 15.5 years old are pretty critical when it

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comes to advertising\textsuperscript{28}. They claimed not to be persuaded by just anything. Before buying a product, they surf the net to get more information. They do not want to be shielded from advertisements, because they want to know what the world has in store for them. Still, marketers should keep in mind that youngsters are a more vulnerable group and that their business needs should not be put ahead of the needs of the youngsters.

2.3. **Do’s and don’ts in youth marketing**

In general, youngsters have favorable attitudes towards advertising\textsuperscript{29}. However, some advertisements work better than others. In this section we give an overview of the do’s and don’ts in youth marketing.

Table 3 summarizes the do’s and don’ts with regard to the content of the marketing message.

**Table 3: Do’s and don’ts with regard to the content of the message**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Apply the AIDA formula</td>
<td>• No excessive use of youth slang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use humor, entertain at all times</td>
<td>• Do not moralize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide quality content</td>
<td>• Do not focus on selling only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talk with youngsters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adapt to their desire to be different</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Take parental wishes into account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Segment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


First of all, the message should be composed according to the AIDA formula, a guideline for marketers with all the elements necessary for persuasive communication:

1) Attention: first, the attention of the audience must be grabbed
2) Interest: then, their interest must be aroused
3) Desire: this gives rise to a certain need
4) Action: ultimately, there must be a call for action

It is thus important to immediately grab the attention of the audience. The most vital part of an advertisement is the beginning. Humor is a powerful tool to grab the attention. Youngsters love to laugh and remember what is funny or unusual. However, humor is not enough. Information should also be conveyed in a credible manner. It is still the qualitative content of the message that counts. There has to be a clear pay-off for youngsters that answers the question “What’s in in for me?”

To know the right content of the marketing message, marketers should talk with youngsters. Young people appreciate participation. If you let them join in the conversation and let them think along, they can generate lots of new ideas.

Another thing you need to know about youngsters is the fact that they want to stand out of the crowd. This need to be different develops from the age of 16 onwards. Before this age, group conformity dominates.

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31 ESOMAR (1997). How to be number one in the youth market. Amsterdam: ESOMAR.
33 Ibid.
Though youngsters can go through a phase of rebellion, they generally have a good relationship with their parents\textsuperscript{37}. They often consult their parents when they have to make decisions, so it is also important to take parental wishes into account.

Moreover, it is essential to approach the separate youth segments differently. The interests of a twelve-year-old are by no means the same as those of an eighteen-year-old\textsuperscript{38}.

What marketers should not do is overdo youth slang\textsuperscript{39}. They could use a little slang to get the youngsters’ attention, but they should make sure it is not outdated. Adults using expressions like “yo homey”, draw sighs and eye-rolling from the young crowd\textsuperscript{40}.

Marketers should also be careful with moralizing messages: they tend to have an adverse effect on youngsters. In the Netherlands, for example, a safety campaign was held to confront youth with their herd animal behavior. The website of the campaign, watvoorkuddedierbenjij.nl, was a total flop\textsuperscript{41}.

Finally, the plain selling of products does not work with youngsters. They immediately see through a company that is only interested in selling\textsuperscript{42}.

Now that we have discussed the content of the marketing message, let us pass on to the form. The do’s and don’ts with regard to the form of the message are displayed in Table 4.


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Irvine, M. (2002). Sales pitches to youth made with slang. The Victoria Advocate, November 15, 2002.


\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
### Table 4: Do’s and don’ts with regard to the form of the message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do’s</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Be consistent</td>
<td>• Do not use plain banners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Create interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tickle the senses, use images</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apply the KISS principle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advertise in unusual places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use celebrities as role models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Go digital</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use various communication channels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First of all, the communication towards youngsters should be consistent. The creation of a youth label or a separate house style aimed at youngsters can result in better recognition and identification with a brand. This helps to create a youthful image\(^{43}\).

Secondly, youngsters love interaction. They want to experience and try new things themselves, and they like speed and action\(^{44}\). To get their attention their senses must be tickled, mainly by visual stimuli. It is not so much what you say but what you show in commercials which impacts on the audience, so it is best to show strong images first, before presenting the text\(^{45}\). This text should also be kept short and to the point. If there is too much text, youngsters will not begin to read it. Follow the KISS principle: Keep It Short and Simple.

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\(^{45}\) *Ibid.*
As far as ad placement is concerned, youngsters especially like ads in unusual places, such as restrooms, concert tickets etc. These ads grab their attention because they are exceptional and untraditional.\(^{46}\)

When it comes to product endorsement, celebrity role models have a lot of potential to influence brand choice among youngsters.\(^{47}\) Take Michael Jordan for example. His range of endorsements for Nike, Coca Cola, Wheaties, McDonald’s, Hanes, WorldCom, Oakley and Gatorade would have contributed about $10 billion to the U.S. economy during the 14 years of his NBA career.\(^{48}\) However, not every celebrity will improve financial returns for companies that employ them in their advertising campaigns, as this depends on several factors such as celebrity image, familiarity, likability and brand match-up.\(^{49}\)

Product endorsement by kids of the same age seems less popular than endorsement by celebrities. Less than 50% of the children prefer to see other kids in advertising. This preference also decreases with age.\(^{50}\) This is probably due to the fact that kids do not consider themselves as kids. Instead, they look up to and want to be like older peers.\(^{51}\)

Marketers should further bear in mind that the youngsters of today are digital natives: they cannot imagine a life without computers. The internet is thus an essential communication channel through which we can reach them.\(^{52}\) Despite their liking of the internet, youngsters

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\(^{49}\) Ibid.


do not like plain banners, though. They do not click on them because they are boring, intrusive and slow-loading. Although the internet is an important communication channel for youngsters, marketers should not only focus on this medium. Young people are used to do several activities and use several channels at the same time: while they read a magazine, they watch television, they listen to the radio, they send text messages or they chat. Moreover, most of the time they do not look for information themselves. Traditional media can help to draw the attention on a website or an online campaign. In the following section we will discuss several communication channels in more detail.

2.4. Communication channels

As said before, marketers should use a wide array of communication channels. It is very important to choose the right channels, because it would be a waste to compose the perfect marketing message, without ever reaching the target group.

In this section we will discuss the impact on youngsters of the following communication channels: internet, television, magazines, newspapers, radio, posters, flyers, direct mail, SMS and school.

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2.4.1. **The internet**

Contrary to what one might believe, the media use of youngsters has not declined in comparison with previous generations. However, the current generation uses different media in a different way. The most significant change that has taken place over the past 20 years, is of course the rise of the internet. Approximately 92% of the Belgian youngsters, aged 16 to 25, has computer access at home. Half of this group uses the internet on a daily basis, and nearly two fifths consults the internet several times a week. Research has further revealed that Belgian youngsters spend on average between 32 minutes and 4 hours and 20 minutes a week on computer related activities.

It is not suprising then, that the internet is the most important source of information for youngsters. They consult the internet to find information about a whole range of subjects: safe sex, the future, other cultures, school assignments etc. Youngsters especially appreciate the internet because of its convenience: they can quickly find a lot of information through the use of a search engine so they do not have to waste time on a visit to the library. Furthermore, the texts available on the internet are usually shorter and more comprehensible than the information they find in books.

Marketers have been quick to realize that the internet is an essential communication channel through which the majority of youngsters can be reached. More and more, they have been shifting spending from traditional to digital media. The internet can be used under several forms in the marketing communication mix: direct e-mail, a company website, etc.

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59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

or advertisement on other websites. Direct e-mail will be discussed later in this chapter, together with direct mail, so we will now focus on the company website and advertisement on other websites.

2.4.1.1. Advertisement on websites

Online advertisement is used frequently by marketers to draw the attention. The most common forms are banners and buttons, that make up 58% of the amount spent on internet advertisement (Figure 7). A banner is a rectangular advertisement on the internet on which consumers can click, to go to another internet page. Buttons are smaller, round or square, advertisements. Intersitials are used less frequently, because of their intrusive character: they are advertisements that are displayed before an expected content page.

Figure 7: Percentages spent on different forms of internet advertisement

Companies should be careful with internet advertisement, though. The effect of online advertisements seems to decrease, because consumers get fed up with the large amount of banners, buttons, intersitials and sponsoring.

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63 Ibid.
On the other hand, advertising on the internet can be worthwhile. According to research of the Internet Advertising Bureau, online advertisement can have a strong communicative effect: it can enhance brand awareness, brand perception, communication of product attributes and purchase intentions\textsuperscript{64}.

If marketers do choose to advertise online, they should bear a few things in mind\textsuperscript{65}. First of all, the advertisement must be placed on websites which are of interest to the target group. Chatboxes (e.g. MSN), search engines (e.g. Google), e-mail sites (e.g. Hotmail) are especially popular with youngsters, followed by entertainment sites with games or information about films, music, TV etc\textsuperscript{66}.

Furthermore, the content must be adjusted to the needs of the target group. Additionally, the content and the design must be in line with the desired image of the company or product and cannot be incompatible with other marketing instruments. Marketers should finally make sure to catch the eye by using bright colours, animation or banners that ask questions. Banners that say “click here” or “free” also yield a higher response than plain banners.

2.4.1.2. Company website

Many companies build a website of their own, after seeing what their competitors, suppliers and customers are doing on the internet. There are several types of company websites. The most basic form is “brochureware”\textsuperscript{67}. This type of site just presents information about the company and its products. It is basically one-way communication: marketers just take the company’s existing marketing literature and post it on the website.


\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.


Other companies strive for interaction and turn their website into a point of contact for the company and its potential customers. By enabling customers to become subscribers and by including current news, forums, articles for customers on various topics of interest, investor information, corporate mission statements, contact information etc. companies provide incentives for customers so they keep coming back to the website. This way, organizations can maintain strong relationships with their customer base.

Of course, creating an interactive website is not enough. The website must also be made known to the target group. Registering the website with as many search engine databases as possible can be a first step, but also links on other websites, newsgroups, e-mail and more traditional forms of advertising can help to spread the word.

An alternative for a company website aimed at youngsters is a company page on social network sites such as Facebook and Netlog. At the moment, these sites are among the hottest properties which have quickly gathered millions of young followers. Recently, Microsoft invested $ 240 million in Facebook in exchange for a 1.6% share. The social network site is estimated to be worth about $ 15 billion.

The concept of social networking sites is that users create a profile and then send “friend requests” to friends, which must be accepted by them. Once a link with a friend has been established, the two users can access each others’ profiles, sharing photos, updating each other on activities, sending messages and virtual gifts, presenting idols and favorite brands etc. These sites are so popular because they allow youngsters to effectively communicate with friends. A site like Facebook also “provokes curiosity, provides a basis for self

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69 Ibid.


expression and evokes memories of the past, along with a myriad of emotional and hedonistic user experiences.\textsuperscript{72}

Companies can also make a company page on Facebook. On such a page they can provide information about the company along with an event calendar, videos, photos, a discussion board and much more. Facebook users can then become a fan of the company. About 21,655 companies have created a company page already, among which Nike, McDonalds and Esprit.\textsuperscript{73}

Here are a few tips to create a successful company page on Facebook:\textsuperscript{74}

1. **Be transparent**: provide information such as contact information, website, telephone number and location. This gives a more personalized impression.

2. **Make the page public**: everyone should be allowed to join the page and to invite other people. Users should be able to post discussions, wall posts, pictures and videos.

3. **Invite existing Facebook friends to become a fan**: these friends can become ambassadors for the brand. If your friends’ friends notice that they have joined a brand page, they will be inclined to check it out as well. Friends without Facebook can also be invited through Outlook, Yahoo, Gmail and Hotmail.

4. **Mention your company page in press releases or blog posts** to attract more members.

5. **Update the content**: members should have a reason to return to the page, so add recent news, videos, photos, events, links, polls, contests etc.

6. **Create relationships with new members**: address new members personally.

It is still uncertain if social networking sites, such as Facebook, will remain as popular as they are today, though. Maybe they are nothing more than a hype that will soon fade away.


However, marketers can only turn the popularity of these sites to their advantage as long as they can.

### 2.4.2. Television and radio

Although the time spent on watching television and listening to the radio has decreased a little since the rise of the internet, these media are still immensely popular with youngsters. Through these channels a large audience can be reached, as the percentage of youngsters that never watches TV or never listens to the radio is close to zero. The only disadvantages of these media are that they can be quite expensive and that youngsters can easily change channels during advertising spots.

If marketers do decide to invest in radio or TV spots, however, on which channels should they run them then? Table 5 and Table 6 display the most popular TV and radio stations in Belgium according to a survey conducted in Antwerp with 4.200 youngsters aged twelve to eighteen.

#### Table 5: The most popular TV stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TV station</th>
<th>Percentage of youngsters that preferred this TV station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT4</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTV/TMF</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanaal2</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRT (Eén)</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VTM</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRT (Canvas)</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRT (Ketnet)</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATV</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish station</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic station</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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76 Ibid.

77 Kanaal2 changed its name to 2BE in 2008.
Apparently, VT4 is the number one favourite with this group, followed by the music channels MTV/TMF and Kanaal2.

Choosing the right TV channel is one thing, but marketers should also know during which TV show it is best to run their spot. Youngsters especially like to watch humoristic TV programs and music shows. As they get older, they also begin to appreciate informative programs, such as the evening news. Films on TV are popular with the young crowd as well. They prefer to watch American comedies, but these preferences also vary with age. As youngsters get older, they appreciate juvenile films, adventure films, westerns and disaster films less than before. Instead, they prefer thrillers, horror films, science fiction and erotic films.

Table 6: The most popular radio stations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radio station</th>
<th>Percentage of youngsters that preferred this radio station</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio Donna</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial station</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio Brussel</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local station</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio 2</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio 1</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klara (Radio 3)</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio 21 (RTBf)</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign station</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish station</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic station</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If marketers want to run a radio spot aimed at youngsters, they are best to go with Radio Donna (MNM), a commercial station (like Q-music), or Studio Brussel. Youngsters are especially fond of radio programs in which requests can be made or in which youngsters are allowed to speak.

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79 Ibid.

80 Radio Donna changed its name to MNM in 2009.

2.4.3. **Newspapers**

Newspapers are not so popular with young people. Barely 14% of all youngsters glance through the newspaper every day. If youngsters do read a newspaper, they prefer Het Laatste Nieuws according to a study of Roe, Van den Bulck, De Cock and Dusart. De Morgen and De Standaard are the papers they dislike the most. However, the opinions of youngsters on newspapers differ greatly. A considerable group is of the opinion that Het Volk and Het Nieuwsblad are the best newspapers, but these papers are also mentioned quite often as papers they dislike. The same study revealed that youngsters particularly like the special youth supplement in newspapers and the pages with cartoons and film reviews. The front page attracts their attention as well, unlike internal policy and stock market news, which are at the bottom of the list of columns to be evaluated positively.

Traditional newspapers may thus not be the ideal medium to reach youngsters, but free newspapers, like Metro, are becoming increasingly popular. Lots of marketers who want to reach a younger audience are now turning to these free newspapers, because the readership of these papers consists mainly of students and highly educated workers in their twenties or thirties.

2.4.4. **Magazines**

Magazines are a frequently used medium among youngsters. As Table 7 points out, just a small minority of youngsters between age twelve and eighteen never reads a magazine. The majority leafs through a magazine at least once a month.

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82 Ibid.


Table 7: The reading of magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of youngsters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>48.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most popular magazines among Belgian youngsters aged twelve to eighteen appear to be Humo, Joepie and Flair (Table 8)\(^{86}\). As youngsters get older, teen magazines lose their appeal and women’s magazines, such as Flair and Feeling become more popular\(^{87}\).

Table 8: The most popular magazines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Magazine</th>
<th>Percentage of youngsters that preferred this magazine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humo</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joepie</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flair</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andere</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dag Allemaal</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Magazine</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knack</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fancy</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voetbalmagazine</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An advantage of magazines is the fact that people do not tend to flick through them just once, so they are exposed to the ad several times.

2.4.5. Posters and flyers

Posters and flyers are relatively cheap media which reach a large audience. They can be displayed almost everywhere. The best places are those where people have to spend some time waiting, such as examination and waiting rooms at dental and medical clinics, buses or

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\(^{86}\) Ibid.

other public transport, windows of businesses, school classrooms or any place where people will be standing in line.\textsuperscript{88}

The message must be reduced to its core, however, because the available advertising space is limited. Moreover, passers-by are only confronted with these media during a short period of time. Since so many advertisements fight for our attention every day, inconspicuous posters will be easily ignored and unappealing flyers will be thrown away.

How can we make sure then that youngsters will take the time to read them? Research revealed that the colour, the form and the slogan are powerful tools to catch the eye.\textsuperscript{89}

Youngsters want big, brightly coloured posters. The information on them does not have to be well-structured: a messy lay-out works as well. Pictures and drawings are very important to draw the attention and the text must be kept as short as possible.

Special poster campaigns also grab the attention of the audience.\textsuperscript{90} Marketers can use a whole set of posters, for example. In general, such a set consists of three to five posters that are similar but not identical. They revolve around the same topic. Sometimes there are several poster sets with different contents: after a week or so a new poster set replaces the old one. A third type is the teaser campaign. Several poster sets with different contents are used here as well, but with the first set people do not know yet what the campaign will be about. The audience has to wait for a following poster set to solve the mystery. There could be more than two poster sets, but there should not be too many as the teasing game gets boring after a while.


2.4.6. Direct mail

Direct mail marketing is a form of direct marketing in which letters, advertisements, samples, brochures etc. are mailed to potential clients. This medium is quite acceptable to youngsters. Research conducted by Ball State University’s Center for Media Design revealed that youngsters are more likely to be influenced by direct mail than by marketing messages on social network sites. 58% of teens between 15 and 17 years old claim they have been influenced by direct mail to make a purchase, whereas only 12% has made a purchase resulting from marketing through a social network site.

Youngsters like receiving mail that is personally addressed to them, since they do not get that many letters with their own name on it.

Direct mail can be expensive for companies, though, and they have to make sure not to violate any privacy rules.

Not so long ago, direct mail consisted of paper only. Lately, three new forms have gained popularity: faxes, emails and voicemails. These forms of direct mail are much faster and not as expensive as letters, but if they are sent to people who are not interested, they could get irritated by this mail. Therefore, marketers should carefully determine the right goals to avoid wasting their money.

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2.4.7. **SMS**

Although text messaging is very popular among youngsters, it does not seem to be the ideal medium for promotional activities. Even though most people take their cellphone everywhere they go and read virtually every text message they get – unlike junkmail – this medium is rather expensive for companies, who need to employ a mobile phone agency to send out the text messages for them. The message also has a limited number of characters, so there is not much space to get the message across. Furthermore, people tend to react negatively to unwanted texts and companies have to make sure their SMS marketing complies with privacy rules. Finally, there are cases in which SMS marketing yielded a discouraging response when used for promotional activities. The company Magic, for instance, sent 100,000 text messages and merely got 12 responses.

2.4.8. **School**

Most students spend half of their wakeful hours in school. It is not surprising then, that research has shown that teachers are important role models for youngsters. That is why schools can also be an interesting communication channel for marketers, especially to promote activities with an educational background, such as Open Company Day.

The advantages of this medium are clear: as a role model, the teacher can explain the activity and can motivate all students to participate, regardless of their place of residence, age, sex and skin color.

However, marketers communicate with schools, not with students, so it is possible that the message is not adjusted to the level of the target group. Furthermore, the school can be an additional filter: if the teacher or the principal does not support the activity, the information

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96 Ibid.


will not reach the youngsters. Finally, there is danger that the activity could get a schoolish and boring image if it is promoted in school.

Marketers should carefully think about what interests teachers and principals, in order to encourage them to promote the activity in the classroom. They could make suggestions, for example, about how to integrate the activity in the lessons. The activity should also be presented in a fun way to students, so as to avoid a boring image, e.g. by linking the activity to a school contest where students have to work together to win a prize.

3. My work placement at Open Bedrijven

The first days of my work placement at Open Bedrijven were aimed at getting to know the company and its activities better. I attended an information session on which potential participating companies are invited to get more information about Open Company Day. This was an ideal opportunity for me to learn how the event is sold to companies. I was also invited to an advice meeting. This is a meeting with companies who have already agreed to take part in Open Company day, to get more information about the practical organization. In such a meeting companies learn how to make Open Company Day brochures, invitations etc. via the Open Bedrijven website and how to use the promotional materials etc.

During the following weeks my job responsibilities mainly consisted of three tasks: the telephonic follow-up and guidance of clients with their prints, the assistance with the development of a communication plan aimed at youngsters and the analysis of the Open Company Day visitor survey of 2008. These tasks will be discussed in greater detail below. For the remainder of my time, I worked on smaller assignments, such as writing texts for the website and assisting with an Open Company Day workshop where participating companies gather creative ideas to leave an indelible impression on their visitors.
3.1. **Telephonic follow-up and guidance of clients**

Companies have to create their own, personalized Open Company Day invitations, brochures, posters etc. by means of a special module on the Open Bedrijven website. This module allows them to load up their company logo and pictures, and to write their own texts before a certain deadline. Once they confirm that they are satisfied with the result the documents are sent to be printed. As I was part of the project coordination team, it was my task e.g. to assist companies that experienced difficulties with this module and to contact clients that had missed their deadline etc. This task made a welcome change from my two other projects on which I mainly worked alone. Although it could be quite a tedious job to repeatedly phone clients and urge them to finish their prints when they had missed the deadline, I also really enjoyed helping people out.

3.2. **Analysis of the Open Company Day visitor survey of 2008**

Each year, Open Bedrijven administers a satisfaction questionnaire to its visitors to evaluate the event and to see how it can be improved. Since I followed several statistics courses during my psychology education, this project was just the thing for me. The task consisted of analyzing the data file and drawing up a report with an overview of the percentages, interesting correlations and suggestions to improve the survey.

Together with my trainee supervisor, Eva D’hondt, we made up a schedule for this project, which consisted of three phases. After each phase I sat down with her to discuss the progress of the project.

In the first phase, the excel file with the survey data had to be made ready for analysis: double questionnaires had to be deleted, open responses had to be placed into categories, etc. I also wrote down some suggestions to improve the questionnaire.

In the second phase, I calculated the percentages and wrote down which correlations could be worth examining.
Finally, I calculated the correlations and drew up a report with the main conclusions and recommendations. I also gave a five minute presentation of my report during a meeting of the sales team.

Some people might find statistics a little dull, but I really like working with numbers. It gave me great satisfaction to be able to complete this project and to make my contribution to the improvement of Open Company Day. During my presentation of the main conclusions, I also felt that my colleagues were genuinely interested in what I had to say and that they will definitely do something with the results.

3.3. **Youth communication plan**

The second big project in which I was involved, was the devising of a communication plan aimed at youngsters. This project will be discussed in greater detail here, as it serves as a case study to illustrate the theoretical framework of youth marketing.

Open Bedrijven wants to attract more youngsters, as visitor surveys have revealed that youngsters are underrepresented on Open Company Day. As it is very important to attract the next generation of visitors, Open Bedrijven drew up a communication plan based on 3 components: communication aimed at principals, parents and the youngsters themselves. Being a young person myself, I was given the responsibility over the last component.

The general concept of Open Company Day does seem to appeal to youngsters, as about 75% of the visitors under the age of 18 report they want to come back in the future. At first sight, the main challenge seems to be to get Open Company Day known among the young crowd and to convince them to come and take a visit.

However, the percentage of youngsters that wants to come back is also somewhat lower than in the other age categories. From the age of 18 onwards, more than 90% of the visitors claim they will return in the future. This is an indication that the content of Open Company Day might be less adjusted to the needs and the expectations of the young crowd as well.
Therefore, I found it very interesting to examine how Open Company Day can be made more appealing for youngsters, how the message should be composed and which communication channels should be used.

3.3.1. Method

Since we wanted to gain a clear understanding of the motives behind the behaviour of youngsters, I chose to go with a qualitative research method by means of focus groups. In general, this method consists of a group conversation, with usually no more than ten persons, about a specific, well-defined subject. The power of this method is that one can gain a lot of new information and creative ideas through the use of a relaxed conversation. This information is not necessarily representative of the entire population, but one can gain an insight into the reasons behind human behaviour, as opposed to standardized questionnaires with predefined response categories. A focus group might be less suitable for private or threatening subjects, but Open Company Day did not seem like a topic that fits into one of those categories.

We organized two focus groups in a secondary school in Melle with the help of one of my colleagues, whose daughter attends this school. We held one focus group with a group of youngsters that had already paid a visit to Open Company Day for a school assignment and another one with a group that had never been to Open Company Day yet. With the first group, we could dilate upon their specific experiences on Open Company Day. From the second group, we could gather information about the image of Open Company Day with youngsters who have never participated in the event and we were able to define the obstacles that prevent them from paying a visit.

The focus groups took place in a classroom in the Paters Jozefieten College in Melle, during two lunch hours in May and June. The participants were final-year students who participated voluntarily after a call in the classroom from their economics teacher.

The group that had already visited Open Company Day consisted of 4 girls and 5 boys, whereas the group that had never been to Open Company Day yet consisted of 8 boys. All of
them followed General Secondary Education and they came from both economical and non-
economical disciplines.

In both groups we used a semi-structured interview, which consisted of a number of fixed
questions to be completed by other questions according to the turn of the conversation. I
drew up a draft version of the fixed questions, which I finalized together with my colleague
Ann, who assisted me with the focus groups.

First, we introduced ourselves to the participants. Then, we briefly explained our project to
make Open Company Day more attractive to youngsters.

The conversation was videotaped, but we reassured the participants that this tape only
served as a reminder and that their answers would be treated confidentially. We
emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and that everybody was free to
express their own opinion.

To break the ice, we asked the students: “What comes to mind, when you think about Open
Company Day?” With this association exercise we wanted to stimulate their thinking
without influencing them. The rest of the interview scheme was slightly different for the two
groups.

The interview scheme for the group that had already visited Open Company Day, was as
follows:

• Which companies have you visited on Open Company Day 2008?
• Why did you choose those companies?
• What do you remember of that day? What did you like about Open Company Day?
• What did you not like about Open Company Day? How could we change this?
• Would you pay another visit to Open Company Day in the future? Why (not)?
• What kind of companies do you like to visit? Why those?
• What should Open Company Day look like to attract more youngsters?
• Are there people in your life that influence your decision to go to Open Company Day?
- Who would you bring along on a visit to Open Company Day?
- Which communication channels should we use to make Open Company Day known among the young crowd?
- How should the message be composed to appeal to youngsters?
- Open Bedrijven is considering to make an Open Company Day page on Facebook. What should be on this page to attract youngsters?
- How can we spread the word among youngsters that an Open Company Day Facebook page exists?

To wind up the conversation we asked this group to make a collage about the “ideal Open Company Day”.

After the association exercise, we first showed a little film to the group that had never been to Open Company Day, so they could imagine better what the event is about. Afterwards, we asked them the following questions:

- Now that you know what Open Company Day is about, would you consider paying a visit?
- What would it take to get you to come to Open Company Day?
- What are obstacles for you to come to Open Company Day?
- What kind of companies do you like to visit? Why those?
- What should Open Company Day look like to attract more youngsters?
- Are there people in your life that influence your decision to go to Open Company Day?
- Who would you bring along on a visit to Open Company Day?
- Which communication channels should we use to make Open Company Day known among the young crowd?
- How should the message be composed to appeal to youngsters?
- Open Bedrijven is considering to create an Open Company Day page on Facebook. What should be on this page to attract youngsters?
- How can we spread the word among youngsters that such an Open Company Day Facebook page exists?
Since the answers of this group were similar to the answers of the group that had already paid a visit to Open Company Day, we did not ask them to make a collage of the ideal Open Company Day as well. Instead, we showed them the Open Company Day website and asked them for their opinion.

### 3.3.2. Results

The results of our research overlapped for the most part with previous findings from youth marketing research.

The group conversations revealed that youngsters want to visit companies that have something to do with their daily activities. The companies that interest them the most are active in the food industry, fashion, drinks, computers, media, press and cars. The companies have to be situated nearby and they have to have something exciting in store for the youngsters. Young people do not like guided tours. Instead, they want concise information on posters and they want to try out new things themselves. Free gifts are appreciated, as well as background music, an activity for a good cause, and contests where they can win prizes. They prefer to visit companies with their parents or with friends.

The youngsters that had never been to Open Company Day know what the event is about, but they think it is pretty boring and schoolish. This image restrains them from paying a visit to one of the companies.

However, both youngsters that had already been to Open Company Day and youngsters that had not, were interested in a future visit, provided that there are participating companies that really appeal to them. They do not have the reflex to search the internet for information on which companies are taking part in Open Company Day. Facebook proved to be a useful tool by which Open Bedrijven can promote Open Company Day among youngsters, as this was the first medium that came to mind when we asked them which communication channels we should use. The youngsters suggested that Open Bedrijven should advertise on facebook and that they should create a company facebook page. On this website they want to see films and photos of participating companies or companies that have participated over
the past years. They also want to find a list on this facebook page with the companies that will participate this year, with the possibility to search companies according to region and activities. Companies that are especially of interest to youngsters should be indicated in a special way. To make the facebook page known among youngsters, they suggest several methods. First of all, there should be a call on the Open Bedrijven website “Join us on facebook”. Next, all participating companies should be incited to become a member of the Open Company Day facebook page. This way, they can announce the event to friends and family members. The youngsters also claimed to be attracted by contests and prizes. These prizes do not need to be expensive: Open Company Day T-shirts, books, coupons, items from participating companies will suffice for youngsters to give Open Company Day publicity on their facebook profile. If they enter a contest, like “become a fan of the Open Company Day Facebook page and win prizes”, this will appear on their profile, so all their friends can see it as well. Another suggestion was to get free publicity by the creation of a Facebook quiz: “which company suits you best and should you visit on Open Company Day?”.

Other popular communication channels that came to mind were youth television channels, flyers, magazines (Flair, Dag Algemeen, Story and Voetbalmagazine), posters, teachers, and the newspapers Het Laatste Nieuws and Het Nieuwsblad. It is essential that the marketing message contains humour to draw the youngsters’ attention.

In general, the reactions to the Open Company Day website were very positive. The youngsters liked the fact that they could look up companies according to region and sector. However, they would like to see more spectacular photos and films on the site, that should also give a hint about what the companies have in store for Open Company Day.

3.3.3. Evaluation

I really enjoyed working on this project. Being a young person myself, I found it very challenging to examine how we could arouse youngsters’ interest in Open Company Day. I also appreciated the fact that I was given so much freedom to carry out this project, although I could always count on the support of my colleagues.
Like all research, this project also had some limitations, though. Because of our limited resources and the fact that I only had a couple of weeks time to complete this project, I only managed to organize two focus groups. Furthermore, the students that participated in the project were all seniors who followed General Secondary Education, so we cannot generalize the results to all youngsters. Maybe focus groups with fifteen-year-olds or with students from Technical Secondary Education would have yielded different results. However, we were able to gather some great ideas that will surely be of much benefit to Open Bedrijven.

4. Conclusion

I am very pleased with my work placement at Open Bedrijven. Seven weeks is not much to learn the ropes in a company. However, I feel that my colleagues showed and taught me as much as they possibly could. They were always open to my ideas and ready to answer any questions I had. I was able to further develop both my writing and presentation skills and I became more proficient in Microsoft Outlook and Excel. Moreover, I had the privilege to attend a couple of sales meetings and information sessions to learn more about the art of selling. I also learned how to better deal with clients e.g. how you can spur them on to make a deadline without sounding impolite. Although I feel that I can still be more assertive with clients, I am sure that the advice my colleagues gave me will serve me well in the future.

MTB has certainly prepared me well for my work placement. Particularly the market research course helped me to complete both my projects: which research method should be chosen, how to formulate questions etc. The MTB projects, such as the marketing communication plan, the Oasis project and the year project also taught me a lot about the practical side of setting up research. The course “data processing in the company” was very useful to me as well, as I frequently worked with Excel during my work placement.

I started the MTB program to gain more practical experience in order to increase my job opportunities and that is exactly what I got. I would certainly recommend it to other students and I would not change a thing about the program. Perhaps it would be nice to
include a lecture about youth communication, but knowing that the MTB program is already quite intense, I realize that a choice has to be made.
References


ESOMAR (1997). *How to be number one in the youth market*. Amsterdam: ESOMAR.


