HOW TO INCREASE BRAND PREFERENCE BY USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CHINA

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This thesis examines and answers the following research question:
“How to increase brand preference by using Social Media in China?”

With most popular social networks from the West being blocked, it is essential for a marketer to have a clear view of the Social Media landscape in China. Unlike western Internet users the Chinese Internet users are very active in sharing their opinions on social networks, blogs and bulletin boards. Every day, several million Chinese talk about the brands with which they interact on the Internet.

Marketers used to focus on getting consumers to buy their brand. Now the focus of marketers has changed to an approach where aftersales and repeat purchases are more important. Marketers extend the relationship with the consumer through acknowledgment, dialogue, incentivization, and activation. This results in consumers maintaining brand preference and becoming brand loyal. Loyal consumers are more likely to rebuy a brand and could also act as influencers to other consumers.

Influencers can be divided into two groups: Mass Mavens, who create content and Mass Connectors, who share content. Besides Chinese Internet users being very active in creating and sharing content online, they also rely heavily on recommendations from other. The marketer’s job is to identify those active influential Internet users and turn them into an ambassador for their brand.

To help the marketers to turn influential Internet users into brand ambassadors the ‘New consumers decision journey’-model is created. The model offers marketers four pillars, which form a good basis for any Social Media strategy. The pillars are: Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging.

In the case study a Social Media strategy for TNT China is discussed. TNT China should start listening to identify influencers for the brand TNT. Then they should join the conversation on Social Media to turn those influencers into brand ambassadors. The brand ambassadors should continually energize the brand ambassadors with an engagement campaign. This way the ambassadors will keep using TNT’s mailing services and recommend TNT China to other consumers. Ultimately this will result into more people preferring TNT as their delivery service.
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Appendix
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Introduction
1. Introduction
During my research on how use Chinese Social Media to increase brand preference I found out that China offers one of the most complex and fragmented Social Media landscapes in the world. Each month millions of people join Internet in China and is still growing faster than before.

Most of the Western companies who start a new office in China don’t know how the online market in China looks like. Since all popular Social Media sites of the West such as Youtube, Twitter or Facebook being blocked, they don’t know which Chinese Social Media sites they have to start the conversation with the target group.

This thesis is written for my graduation at Rotterdam University and is part of a book will be published in China later this year.

Feel free to get in touch.

Paul Koole, August 2011

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1.1 Practical relevance

1.1.1 Problem definition
Chinese Internet users are diverging from Western Internet users in significant ways. Compared to the rest of the world, China has a complex Social Media landscape. Western companies can’t get hold of it and don’t know how to use Social Media in China to increase brand preference.

1.1.2 Objective research
This research aims to clarify the Social Media market in China. Since the online market in China is more complex, it is a hard job for marketers to approach the Chinese market with a good marketing strategy. The ultimate objective is to clarify how to increase brand preference with Social Media in China.

1.1.3 Research field
The parcel market in China is changing fast. Worldwide many consumers buy products online that delivery companies have to send to the office or home after purchasing. Companies in China who are in the first phase of using Social Media could use the research to start with a perfect Social Media approach on Chinese Social Media sites. Since this research is partly on behalf of TNT China, the last part of this research is focussed on delivery companies in China.
1.1.4 Research Question
The main research question in this thesis is:
“How to increase brand preference by using Social Media in China?”

1.1.4.1 Sub Questions
To answer the research question, the following sub research question are defined:
“What is Social Media?”
“How does Social Media in China looks like?”
“How does the Internet users in China looks like?”
“What is brand preference?”
“What is Social Media marketing?”
“How does Social Media marketing in China looks like?”

1.1.5 Research structure
To give answer on the research question this research will start with a theoretical part where will be explained what Social Media is and how Social Media in China looks like. The case study in last part will be explained how to approach the Chinese market with a good strategy to achieve more brand preference with the target group.
two
Social Media in China
This chapter will examine the Social Media landscape of China. With most popular social networks from the West being blocked, it is essential for a marketer to have a clear view of the Social Media landscape in China.

Unlike western Internet users the Chinese Internet users are very active in sharing their opinions on social networks, blogs and bulletin boards. Every day, several million Chinese talk about the brands with which they interact on the Internet. This chapter will reveal the ins and outs of the Chinese Social Media landscape and their users.
2.1 What is Social Media

What is Social Media? On Internet thousands of definitions can be found. Many definitions are quite similar and can be used in the same way. This section will examine how Social Media is defined and used throughout this thesis.

2.1.1 Social media defined

In the benefit of this thesis two different definitions are selected. One definition will define Social Media from the consumers point of view, the second the marketers point of view.

First, when Social Media is approached from a consumer’s point of view, Scott’s definition is used. David Meerman Scott, author of the book ‘The New Rules of Marketing and PR’, defines Social Media as:

“Social Media provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online and differ from so-called ‘mainstream media’ in that anyone can create, comment on, and add to Social Media content.” (Scott, 2010)

On the other hand, approaching Social Media from marketer’s point of view Safko’s definition is used. In his book ‘The Social Media bible’, Lon Safko defines Social Media as:

“Social Media is a set of tools or technology that allows marketers to more efficiently connect and build relationships with brands customers and prospects.” (Safko,2010)
2.1.2 Use of definition
In this chapter Scott’s definition is used. From consumers point of view the different Chinese Social Media platforms will be discussed. In addition the Chinese online consumer behaviour on sharing ideas, content, and thoughts and relationships online will be examined.

Safko’s definition of marketer’s point of view will be used in chapter three. Based on this definition marketers perspective will be discussed by giving answer on how to use Social Media as a set of tools to increase brand preference.
2.2 Social Media in China

Social Media Landscape @China
2.2.1 Adoption of Social Media

In China, many young people actually have more friends online than offline (MTV, 2008). This points to a convergence of the offline and online worlds, where it is less important to distinguish between what happens online from the “real world”. In China, more than in many countries, Social Media has become deeply integrated into people’s lives. Numerous factors help to drive the Chinese, more than other populations, to engage in Social Media. These include rural-to-urban migration that has separated families, the loneliness of the one-child generation, and a distrust of information from government-controlled media (Crampton, 2011).

Rather than eliminate Social Media, restrictions on foreign websites and Social Media have resulted in a state-approved ecosystem in which Chinese-owned properties thrive on successful domestic Social Media sites. For instance, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are blocked in China, but their Chinese equivalents are expanding. By some measures, the usage of Chinese Social Media is among the most intense in the world.

Marketers should learn how Chinese consumers use Social Media and take advantage of the platforms to find and activate influential Internet users who are talking about brands and their products.

With an Internet population of 457 million Internet users, China has the largest Internet population in the world. With 73.3 million new Internet users last year, China still growing rapidly and reached a penetration rate of 34.3% at the end of December 2010 (CNNIC, 2011). As shown in figure 2.1.

With unique and often multiple versions of common Social Media platforms, China offers one of the most complex and fragmented Social Media landscapes in the world. China’s Social Media platforms and online behaviours vary in important ways from those that may be considered their international equivalents. Language, culture and levels of economic development drive local variations in Internet usage, and these variations are not all due to censorship. Even without sophisticated censorship, Internet users in Japan and South Korea, for example, flock to domestically developed Social Media platforms such as GREE and Cyworld, respectively, rather than internationally known sites.

To show the development of Social Media in China, the research company CIC developed a Social Media prism that places international platforms on the inside ring and their local equivalents on an outer ring. The prism is shown on the left page.

[Graph showing growth of Chinese Internet population over the last 8 years]
2.2 Social Media in China

2.2.2 Types of social media
Before taking action, it’s important for brands to have an understanding of these different types of Social Media. It is necessary to focus on the four most popular places for participation, namely Bulletin Board Systems, Blogs, Micro blogs, and Social Network Sites; and to identify what makes each of them unique from an Internet user participation standpoint.

2.2.2.1 Bulletin Board Systems
Bulletin boards, or better known as forum, remain extremely popular in China. In 2010, the number of users who use BSS on regular basis has increased by 32.4% to a total of 148 million (CNNIC, 2011). According to statistics from iResearch, 60% of users visit at least 3 BBS sites more than 3 times each week and 98% of online users have contributed to a BBS by publishing articles, replying to posts or participating in polls (iResearch, 2010).

Over 81% of BBS users search online recommendations when making purchase decisions, suggesting that reviewing recommendations before purchasing is becoming a regular habit for consumers. For example, on automobile BBS sites alone, 500,000 consumers publish over 13 million consumer comments every month (CIC, 2010). Users rely on critical consumer comments about products and services from clothes and cosmetics to restaurants and cars. BSS usually involve a shared passion about a specific subject which drives the community.

Tianya is currently the largest BBS site in China with 6 million registered users and 200,000 online users daily discussing topics including society, culture, economy, fashion, entertainment, sports, campus, city, military, politics and philosophy. The top three motivations for participating on BBS are sharing opinions (73%), seeking help (50%), and helping others (43%) (CIC, 2008).

2.2.2.2 Micro blogs
Micro-blogs are highly revolutionary and have seen a rapid growth rate, having a profound influence on Internet industry. The micro-blog in China is more popular than, for instance, Twitter in the US. Sina Weibo is China’s leading site for micro-blogging, claiming 87% of the time spent on micro-blogging services in China (iResearch, 2011). Their success is partly attributed to the social media vacuum created when the Chinese government blocked Twitter in June 2009. Taking advantage of this vacuum, Sina Weibo appeared in August 2009.

When Sina Weibo began in 2010 only 36 million of the Chinese Internet users had a registered account on a micro blog; one year later in 2011, this number has increased significantly to a total of 200 million (CIC, 2011). According to Sina Weibo they have over 150 million registered users, reaching 25 million messages on a daily basis. Per month 20 million new users register on Sina Weibo.

Companies are starting to understand the importance of micro blogging. Micro blogs are seen as a newly rising network application that is becoming an important tool to communicate with the target group. Currently 5,000 enterprises which have opened official micro-blogs on Sina Weibo for online promotion, PR or recruitment purposes (RedTech, 2011). Micro blogs are a newly rising network application that is becoming an important tool to communicate with the target group.
2.2.2.3 Blogs
The advantages of micro blog applications have caused an increase in blogging. Micro blogging makes it easy to attract readers to the extended versions of a writer’s micro blog, the so-called blog post on a blog. The numbers show that since 2009, China has ranked above the daily global average in reading and writing blogs. With high growth in the penetration rate of blogs users among all Internet users from 33% to 64.4%, the number of blog users increased to 295 million during 2010 (CNNIC, 2011).

According to Sam Flemmings, the CEO of Social Business Intelligence CIC, blogs created by the fans of a brand are more attractive than an official blog since they include real product experiences and are therefore more credible and interesting (CIC, 2008).

2.2.2.4 Social Network Sites
In 2010, Social Network Sites (SNS) witnessed an increased usage among Chinese Internet users. Until June 2010, the number of Internet users who use social networking sites reached 235 million, an increase of 59.18 million. The penetration rate of social networking reached 51.4%, an increase of 5.6% compared with 2009 (CNNIC, 2011).

Where reading news used to be the top online activity in 2008, at 49%, a report from the Data Center of the Chinese Internet (DCCI) shows that in 2011 Chinese Internet users spend 41% of their time online on social networks and only 13% read news, which indicates a major shift meaning they are no longer purely consumers of web content, but are now more open to communicate, share, and engage online as well (DCCI, 2011).

In China, sites as Qzone, Kaixin001, Renren and many more compete for attention from segmented audiences, ranging from upmarket urban youths to university students and migrant workers. An early mover, RenRen is one of the most popular SNS in China with a main focus on university students and young urban professionals with white-collar jobs; however, the company faces resurgent competition from rival Kaixin001, as well as Tencent and Sina Weibo (RedTech, 2011).
2.2 Social Media in China

2.2.3 Landscape overview
To get an insight in Social Network Sites in China the most popular ones will be reviewed. A more detailed overview can be found in appendix 2.3.

2.2.3.1 Qzone
China’s largest social network is built on the back of the 637 million accounts using Tencent’s QQ Messenger. It allows users to write blogs, keep diaries, send photos and listen to music. QZone originally provided individual space, similar to MSN Space. In June 2008, Tencent added social network elements and formally joined the battle of SNS. It combines the MSN Space type of blog into the Facebook type of SNS and drives users mainly from QQ, the most popular Instant Messaging program in China. Its users are primarily teens, especially those in lower tier cities.

2.2.3.2 RenRen
RenRen was one of China’s earliest SNSs and, with 170 million users, and is one of the market leaders. Its user base consists largely of Chinese university students, young urban professionals, and high school students. It is also now focusing more on white-collar workers in their late 20s and early 30s as well as high school students. It started as Xiaonei.com which means “on campus” in Chinese. In August 2009 it changed its name into Renren, which means “everybody” in Chinese. The site is organized around users’ school and graduation classes and its primary users are students. On a daily basis, users upload 8 million photos and videos and write 600,000 blogs about their activities.

2.2.3.3 Pengyou
Tencent Pengyou launched in early 2009. Originally targeted students and recently extended to office workers as well. Tencent’s latest entry into the real-name social networking space has many rural users.

2.2.3.4 Sina Weibo (Micro blog)
Sina Weibo, with 150 million users, is by far the most popular micro blogging platform in China. It is threatening China’s social networks with a new model. Like Twitter, Sina Weibo allows users to post 140-character messages, and users can follow friends and find interesting comments posted by others. Unlike Twitter, Sina Weibo allows threaded comments, pictures, videos, Instant Messaging, and Location-Based Services.

2.2.3.5 Kaixin001
Kaixin001 is a game-oriented Social Network Site designed for a more mature audience of young professionals. Its users do not upload personal content but instead play games such as Parking War, Friends for Sale & Happy Farm, and share information they find elsewhere, often relating to health, relationships, and professional advancement. It grew quickly in 2009 and gained popularity amongst white-collar workers with its social games and post-forwarding features which led to the “Kaixin addiction” phenomenon among office workers and it being banned in many offices (Clendenin, 2011).

2.2.3.6 51.com
51.com is one of the earliest movers on the Chinese Internet. Rather than reconnecting offline friends, such as classmates and colleagues, 51.com focuses on connecting those who are in or from the same town. It jumped into games as it turned hot and gaming revenue is believed to generate more than one-third of sales (Clendenin, 2011). Its user base is more diverse than the other Social Network Sites in the sense that it has more users from lower tier cities.

2.2.3.7 Douban
Douban is the largest movie, music and book database and online community in China. It attracts young urban Chinese who get together over movies, books, music, and often hold offline activities, such as trips to local art exhibitions. It is a good network for hipsters and creatives because of their common interests. Its primary users tend to be the hippie urban young.
2.3 Social Media users

2.3.1 Definition of social media users
Oxford dictionary defines users as: “a person who uses or operates something”. Social media users are people who use Social Media platforms as discussed in the section “Types of Social Media”.

2.3.2 Social media users in China
China has 235 million Social Media users where 27% of the users have created a profile on five or more social media sites (CNNIC, 2011). With 92% of the Chinese Internet users visiting Social Media sites at least three times per week are Chinese Internet users are more active on Social Media than users elsewhere in the world (Shanghai Business Review, 2011).

Even more importantly, Chinese Internet users are more likely to create content as creators and critics. A Forrester Research Social Techno Graphics Study classifies Chinese consumers into a ladder with six overlapping levels based on their level of participation in social media. The six levels in the Social Techno Graphics Ladder is shown in appendix 2.2 (Forrester, 2007).

As can be seen in the model, the percentage of Internet users who create more content about a brand amounts to 44% of all Internet users in China. To compare it with Europe, as an example, it is only 14%. The next group, critics, includes users who are commenting or posting ratings and reviews. 46% of the Chinese Internet users are critics. Using the same comparison as before, the amount of Internet users in Europe who are critics is much lower at only 19%.

This comparison shows that Chinese Internet users are more willing to comment, rate and review content and are also more active in creating content about certain brands in China.
2.3 Social Media users

2.3.3 Demographics

This section will examine the demographic structure of Internet users in China.

**Gender**

By December 2010, the gender distribution of male and female Internet users in China was 55.8% male and 44.2% female. After years of an increased share in female Internet users, 2010 was the first year the proportion of females decreased. The proportion of female Internet users decreased from 45.8% in 2009 to 44.2% in 2010. The figure on the right shows the gender distribution Internet users in 2009 and 2010 (CNNIC, 2011).

**Age**

The age structure of Internet users continues to develop towards maturity. In 2010, the proportion of net citizens at the age of 30 and above has increased from 38.6% in the end of 2009 to 41.8% at the end of 2010. A decrease occurred in the amount of Internet users aged from 10 to 19, which mainly resulted from the decline in the population of that age group (CNNIC, 2011). According to iResearch, the concentration in the young population is because online entertainment applications, such as online shopping and socialization tools, are more attractive to the young generations. Moreover, young adults are relatively more technologically skilled, which facilitates the adoption of Internet. The figure on the right shows Internet users’ age distributions for 2009 and 2010 (CNNIC, 2011) (iResearch, 2010).

**Income**

The Internet continues to cover more persons with low income. This does not mean that current Internet users earn less money, but more people from second- and third-tier cities start using the Internet. Compared to the end of 2009, the proportion of Internet users with an individual monthly income less than RMB 500 (USD 76) has increased from 18% to 19.4%, and the proportion of Internet users with an income between RMB 501 (USD 77) to RMB 2,000 (USD 310) has increased from 41.7% to 42.8%. Internet users without any income have decreased from 10% to 4.6%. In 2010, more than 66% of Internet users have an income level of less than RMB 2,000 (USD 293) per month. The figure on the left shows the income level of Internet users in 2009 and 2010 (CNNIC, 2011).
During the year 2010, there was a large increase in the number of Internet users with junior middle school background, from 26.8% to 32.8%. The relative amount of Internet users with senior middle school background declined for the first time, from 40.2% to 35.7%. Internet users with professional training school, undergraduate education and above remained at the same amount, which was a comparatively small proportion. This shows us that the Internet is no longer limited to higher education groups, but also penetrates more widely. The figure on the left shows the Internet users’ educational structure in 2009 and 2010 (CNNIC, 2011).

In terms of occupations of Internet users, the proportion of students, ordinary employees of enterprises, self-employed labourers all continued to increase in 2010, reaching 30.6%, 16.2% and 14.9% respectively. The proportion of workers from second tiers and with lower incomes, such as those from the agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry and fishery industries, increased much faster from 2.8% to 6%, while the number of unemployed users decreased from 9.8% to 4.9% (CNNIC, 2011).

With the rapid development of informatization construction, the Internet access conditions in second- and third-tier areas are improving. With more qualified hardware devices promoting the sustained increase in the number of Internet users from rural areas. By December 2010, the number of rural Internet users had increased by 16.9% and reached 125 million, which is 27.3% of the overall Internet users in China. However, the increasing growth in the number of rural Internet users is relatively low to that of urban Internet users (CNNIC, 2011).
2.3 Social Media users

2.3.4 Persona’s
To make it more clear who the Chinese Internet users are, eight personas were created. Each of these fictional personas is based on the demographical facts discussed previously. This information was combined with the value and personality segmentation of Roland Berger. Berger conducted research to define the consumer values and personalities used in the personas (Roland Berger, 2010). These personas start with the most common Internet users in China, the self-centred, and end with the least common Internet user, the conformist. The created personas are based on the Internet statistics discussed previously.

**Liang He (Self-centered)**
- Male
- 19 years old
- Student at senior middle school
- Lives in Shanghai
- Income 450 RMB a month
- Likes fashion and luxury
- Rejects traditional values
- Early adaptor
- Active on social network sites: Renren and Sina Weibo

**Xiu Wu (Traditional maximalist)**
- Female
- 37 years old
- White-collar job
- Lives in Beijing
- Income 3000 RMB a month
- Likes good service and long-term value
- Holds traditional values but seeks fun and status
- Active on social network sites: Qzone and Kaixin001

**Fai Liao (Hedonist)**
- Male
- 24 years old
- Undergraduate Student at university
- Lives in Zhejiang
- Income 1500 RMB a month
- Likes new channels and innovation
- Fun & entertainment seekers
- Trendy
- Active on social network sites: Douban and Sina Weibo

**Dong Cheng (Modern Performer)**
- Male
- 33 years old
- Self employed
- Lives in Guangdong
- Income 4500 RMB a month
- Likes efficiency and performance
- Is serious and professional
- High performer
- Active on social network sites: Sina Weibo and RenRen
Lili T’ang (Minimalist)

Female
16 years old
Student at Junior middle school
Lives in Jiangsu
Income 250 RMB a month
Likes low price, traditional channels and practicality
Cautious and avoid risk
Values privacy and peace
Active on social network sites: Douban and Sina Weibo

Aimee Haio (Traditionalist)

Female
27 years old
Works in a shop
Lives in Zhejiang
Income 2000 RMB a month
Likes quality, long-term value and green
Family-centered
Traditional values
Active on social network sites: Kai-xin001 and Sina Weibo

Shi Chiang (Progressive maximalist)

Male
24 years old
Postgraduate student at university
Lives in Beijing
Income 1500 RMB a month
Likes new channels and innovation
Rule-breaker
Goal-driven
Extravert
Active on social network sites: RenRen and Qzone

Jiang Li Chang (Conformist)

Female
34 years old
Works in restaurant
Lives in Tianjin
Income 1500 RMB a month
Likes low price, traditional channels and practicality
Prefers quiet life
Adheres to social conventions
Active on social network sites: Kai-xin001 and RenRen
2.4 Conclusion
In this chapter Scott’s definition “Social Media provides the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online and differ from so-called ‘main-stream media’ in that anyone can create, comment on, and add to social media content.” is used to create an overview of the Social Media landscape in China.

China has the largest Internet population in the world and is still growing. Many of the young people in China have more friends online than offline. Numerous factors help to drive the Chinese to engage in social media. They are very active in sharing ideas, content, thoughts and relationships on different types of Social Media.

With unique and often multiple versions of common social media platforms, China offers one of the most complex and fragmented social media landscapes in the world. Restrictions on foreign websites and social media have resulted in a state-approved ecosystem in which Chinese-owned properties thrive on successful domestic social media sites.

Social Media users in China are more likely to create content as creators and critics. Marketers must find and activate influential Internet users who are talking about brands and their products. The eight created personas can be used as a standard for the eight main target groups of users existed on the Chinese Internet.
three
Increase brand preference with Social Media
This chapter will examine how to increase brand preference with Social Media. The complex social media landscape of China makes it harder for marketers to understand how to start with their Social Media marketing approach. This chapter will reveal a four pillar marketing approach that gives brands in China a good start with their Social Media approach. It starts creating a loyal relationship with their target group by making use of what the Chinese social media landscape has to offer.
3.1 Brand preference

3.1.1 What is brand preference
The Oxford dictionary defines ‘brand’ as:
“A type of product manufactured by a particular company under a particular name.”.

‘Preference’ is defined as:
“A greater liking for one alternative over another or others.”.

The two definition combined result in the definition for ‘brand preference’:

“Brand preference is a greater liking for one brand over other brands.”
3.1.2 Traditional marketing

One of the best-known traditional marketing models was created by St. Elmo Lewis back in 1898. St. Elmo Lewis’ model maps a theoretical customer journey from the moment a brand or product attracted the consumer’s attention to the point of action or purchase. The model is often referred to as the AIDA model, which stands for Awareness, Interest, Desire, and Action.

The AIDA model describes the four states of behaviour that covers almost all of the consumer’s purchase experience, from being unaware of a product or service to the actual purchase. For example, when customers want to buy a new laptop they first become aware of the laptops that are currently available on the market. After receiving additional information, an interest develops in one or more laptops. Eventually this results in a desire to buy one of those laptops and the act of buying the selected laptop.

3.1.2.1 Awareness

The first job of a marketer is to attract the attention of their potential customers. Consumers have to be made aware of a brand with the desire to purchase. Awareness can, for instance, come from a message communicated on TV, on radio, outdoors, in newspapers or in magazines (Lukas, 2004).

3.1.2.2 Interest

Next, the marketer’s job is to create interest by communicating the brand values. The consumers want to familiarise themselves with the current product range of a brand (Jaffe, 2010). As the funnel begins to narrow, now a group of interested people is that have some kind feeling about the brand and their value or selling proposition.

3.1.2.3 Desire

Marketers may be able to get consumers interested, but there is simply too much choice in the marketplace for consumers to believe that a particular brand is the best available. Marketers have to create a desire in consumers by showing them how the product will solve some of their problems and what they can experience when they use the product (Goldman, 1958)

3.1.2.4 Action

Where initially there were plenty of consumers aware of the product, there is now just a fraction of the selection who are willing to buy the actual product. The marketer’s target is to activate those customers into actually buying a product.

The marketer’s job used to be to move people from the large top down to the small end with the goal of reaching as many potential consumers as possible. However, today’s marketing is more complex and less linear.
3.1.3 How marketing has changed

In the 1960s, an advertisement asked people to do one thing: purchase the product. Tempting images were used to make people crave an object and prompt them to buy it.

Audiences nowadays have more control over what they watch and to whom they listen. They are interested in designing their own messages for ads that target them. Also, they want to be recognized as individuals whose power expands beyond their purchase decisions.

Marketing has changed and marketing continues to change every day; once marketers were in control - now the consumers are the ones in charge. It is therefore necessary to come up with new approach that marketers can use to attract customers to buy their products.
Complexity of marketing

Marketers used to use the AIDA model to create their touch points and promotional communication messages. Although the AIDA model seems to become out-dated due to changing of audiences, the phases such as the awareness and action phases remain important. Consumers need to know that a product or service exists in order to buy it and the marketer’s endpoint is still a transaction.

Factors such as recommendations from friends or family and product reviews influence consumers and change their decision making processes (Forrester, 2007). The funnel’s consideration, preference, and action stages ignore these factors that, nowadays, are becoming more and more important. These factors make the process of researching and buying decidedly nonlinear.

It is no longer possible to rely on a predictable path to purchase. Instead, more realistic behaviour is witnessed, mixed with accelerated, skipped, and even repeated steps or pathways. As Forrester’s model below predicts, the real process looks more like a complex network of detours, back alleys, alternative entry and exit points, external influences, and alternative resources (Forrester, 2007).

![Complexity lies at the center of the marketing funnel](image-url)
3.1 Brand preference

3.1.4. New funnel integration
As discussed in the last section, the traditional marketing funnel (AIDA) is fully focused on driving the action, purchase or closing the deal. Once that happens, there is an end to the funnel. The funnel has an open end and nothing happens beyond the action phase. According to Jaffe, there needs to be a single point of contact that accompanies customers who continue their brand journey. Therefore, he decided to change the traditional marketing model into a new integration.

As can be seen in the model, the left side of the new integration is the traditional marketing model and represents the traditional acquisition of new customers for a brand. The right side is the new integrated part of the funnel, which adds four new phases to it and which can be split into two parts; representing the retention part, to keep the customers aware of the brand, and the acquisition part where current customers incentivize and activate new customers to buy a product or a brand. The new model will be explained using the case ‘Dell Hell’.

Case Dell Hell
Although it occurred some time ago, Dell remains the classical example of how not to conduct customer service. They failed their acknowledgment by ignoring their customers who were experiencing problems with the company’s formerly flawless customer service. One of those customers, Jeff Jarvis, went to war with Dell. His weapon was his blog, BuzzMachine, where he wrote a blog post on it called “Dell Hell (Jarvis, 2005)”.

Jarvis’s campaign brought the power of blogs to international attention. Despite the onslaught of bad press and negative blogging, Dell remained silent. While the flames of “Dell Hell” burned, Dell Inc. played the fiddle and did nothing, at least publicly. The company refused to comment on any of Jarvis’s blogs and did not respond to any press statements regarding the incident. As a matter of fact, during the height of Dell Hell, Dell closed its online customer forum. The silent treatment did not work in Dell’s best interests and served only to make matters worse (Williams, 2009).

The reason for Dell’s silent treatment was quite simple. Dell knew what was being said about them in the blogosphere, but it was company policy to look but not touch, or, in this case, not to reply publicly. It can also be argued that Dell did not take blogging seriously since it was still a fairly new medium. During the time of the “Dell Hell” rant there were not many companies using blogging as a communication tool, so in the eyes of Dell, blogging did not have much credibility (Williams, 2009).
Acknowledgement

Customers are very important for a brand and marketers have to understand that. More importantly, they have to show their customers they understand it by telling them that they want to build a long-term relationship.

In case of Dell, people now see Dell Hell, but they could have reacted to Jarvis’s call. Instead they ignored the problems the customers experienced when they should have come up with a solution and built a better relationship by sending out a letter in which they apologised for any problems.

Dialogue

The next step is to keep the good relationship going with the brands’ customers. In a perfect environment, marketers talk early, often, and honestly to their customers. Establishing platforms for future dialogue makes it a lot easier for customers to reach out to companies, and vice versa. One of the things marketers can do to activate dialogue with its customers is to establish customer clubs, forums, communities and groups where people can connect with each other, ask questions, provide answers, and socialize.

Dell simply did not listen to its customers. However, finally, one year after Jarvis’s blog post they launched an official Dell customer services blog along with two further “social media” sites “Dell Studio” and “IdeaStorm” to give customers a online area to actually start a dialogue with Dell (Rogers, 2007).

Incentivization

After the dialogue phase, marketers have to show their customers that they really like consumers making repeated purchases. In comparison to Volkswagen Dell can learn a lot. As part of the introduction of the new Golf, Volkswagen rewarded their most loyal customers by giving a new car away. The goal of the campaign was to find their most loyal customers and activate them to buy the new type of car (Volkswagen, 2008).

Activation

The next step in this phase is to motivate brands’ customers to share their good experiences with their friends and family, and even selling the product at an authentic and communal partnership level. With Dell lacking to reach this phase of the funnel a KLM promotion will be taken as an example. For instance, KLM, the Dutch Royal Airline, began a new campaign in 2011 to promote their city trip flights. Internet users could start their own promotion page where they could ask friends on Social Media to join the campaign. They had 99 hours to get 99 friends into the group and then they could win a trip from Amsterdam to Berlin. This is a great example of how to let consumers activate other people to join and let them spread the message around the Internet (KLM, 2011).

3.1.5 Loyalty

By using the new integration model, marketers can bring consumers brand preference to a higher level. The traditional AIDA model provides an approach for marketers to let consumers create brand preference. By extending the relationship with the consumer through acknowledgment, dialogue, incentivization, and activation consumers brand preference can be maintained, leading into brand loyalty.

Brand loyalty implies that consumers bind themselves to products or services as a result of a deep-seated commitment, argues Bloemer and Kasper. In their research, they assert that repeat purchase behaviour “is the actual re-buying of a brand” whereas loyalty includes “antecedents” or a reason or fact occurring before the behaviour (Kasper; Bloemer, 1995).

Using the new integration model leads into building a durable relationship between the brand and its consumers. It is the marketer’s job to create this bond, which ultimately leads into loyal consumers. Loyal consumers are less likely to create a brand preference for other brands.
3.2 Social Media marketing

3.2.1 What is social media marketing

The Oxford dictionary defines ‘marketing’ as:
“The action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.”.

This means the definition for ‘Social Media marketing’ is:
“The action or business of promoting and selling products or services with Social Media.”

In the definition above, Social Media is focused on marketer’s perspective. As we have seen in chapter two, the definition for Social Media from marketers perspective is:

“Social Media is a set of tools or technology that allows marketers to more efficiently connect and build relationships with brands customers and prospects.” (Safko, 2010).
3.2.2 Influential consumers

Loyal consumers are not only more likely to rebuy a brand, as discussed in section 3.1.4, they can also act as influencers to other consumers. According to Gladwell, the influential consumers can be divided in two groups of people; Mavens and Connectors (Gladwell, 2000)

3.2.2.1 Mass Mavens

Mass Mavens are influential consumers who create and share content about products and services in other social channels such as video sites, blogs, forums, or ratings and review sites. They represent 11.1 per cent of the total amount of Internet users, but are responsible for 80 per cent of messages and opinions shared about a specific brand. Mass mavens have a clear opinion and want to share this opinion (Forrester, 2010).

3.2.2.2 Mass Connectors

Mass Connectors are influential consumers who contribute greatly to the impressions of brands and services in social networks. They represent 4 per cent of the total number of Internet users but are responsible for 80 per cent of influential impressions posted and shared. Mass Connectors share content found on Internet with their friends and ensure that the content gets to the potential consumers of a brand (Forrester, 2010).
3.2 Social Media marketing
3.2.3 Brand ambassadors

The impressions created by Mass Mavens and shared by Mass Connectors are crucial for marketers. They shape the consumers initial consideration set. Influenced consumers consider fewer brands at the outset as potential purchasing options. It also is more likely to be adopted into the consumer’s initial consideration set when recommended by people. This because of the fact that 70 per cent of the consumers trust information and opinions posted online and rely on word of mouth in the decision-making process. In addition, 90 per cent of the customers trust recommendations from people they know (Nielsen, 2009).

The marketer’s job is to identify the Mass Mavens and Connectors. After identifying the brands mavens and connectors on Social Media they have to be activated as brand ambassadors. This is important since consumers heavily rely on triggers as (friends) recommendations. Marketers have to activate and stimulate consumers who are loyal and willing to recommend the brand to their friends and other consumers online. Now loyal consumers are turned into brand ambassadors.

To help marketers activate the brand ambassadors a model is designed. The new model is a combination of the models discussed previously and is inspired by the model of McKinsey (attached in Appendix 3.1). In the new model the consumer’s post purchase experience is extended with Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging.

This new approach will create a higher level of the desired state for a specific product to achieve the ultimate goal: a strong, positive, loyal bond between brand and consumer so the consumer will return to the brand and recommend it repeatedly.
3.2 Social Media marketing

3.2.4 Social media marketing model
The model below creates an approach for marketers who want to start using Social Media in their marketing strategy. In addition to the existing models, a four-pillar framework is added. The four pillars are: Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging.
3.2.4.1 Listening

Listening is an important part of Social Media as it not only keeps you in pace with how the market is shaping out but, at the same time, also offers insight into where these conversations are happening so brands can determine where their Social Media efforts should go.

Brands have to understand where the consumers search and have conversations about a brand. By listening to conversations and reading content that Internet users publish, an impression will be created of what people like or dislike about the brand. Listening makes the process a lot easier and facilitates a good approach of Social Media strategy whereby some costly errors can be avoided.

The online media that brands would like to monitor include news, web, blogs, images, videos, SNS, and micro blogs. Brands have to find out which online media sites people are active on and having conversations about the brand. The next step is to start by visiting the web sites daily/weekly and engaging internally by monitoring responses of Internet users. While it's relatively easy to start sending out messages on Social Media, listening is the critical component in developing a Social Media strategy that is right for both your audience and your objectives.

3.2.4.2 Joining

One of the most common mistakes is using Social Media as a way to sell a product (Business Marketing Blog, 2011). Instead, content should be created with a view to inspiring and participating in conversations.

It is important to follow a few participation principles to gain the trust and respect of consumers. Linking back to Internet users’ content and giving them credit could be a good start to join conversations. Brands have to understand, first, that they can’t push their information and have to give more than they take. The second point to keep in mind that it is not a smart move to edit or delete any positive or especially negative comments contributed by Internet users.

3.2.4.3 Energizing

As discussed in the section 3.2.2, Mass Mavens and Mass Connectors are the most important Internet users on the web. Mass Mavens have a clear opinion and want to share it. Mass Connectors share content created by Mass Mavens on the Internet with their friends and ensure that the content reaches the potential consumers of a brand. Both influence Internet users with their recommendations, reviews, and opinions online.

Brands have to recognise who the influential people related to the brand are. When energizing influential people like Mass Mavens, there exists the opportunity to let Internet users engage, keep up with and share content about the brand on a daily basis.

By giving credit to influential people who share content, the brand will reward their behaviour and energize them to keep focusing on influencing other people. Letting the influencers become involved with the brand and energizing them will result in them being more willing to share or recommend the brand to friends and family.

3.2.4.4 Engaging

Engaging is all about activation and increasing brand preference. Listening, Joining, and Energizing are crucial before starting to Engage with a campaign. Listen first to the target group to understand what they want. Join the conversation by giving them respect and earn respect from them. Energize the most important people who can influence others. Then ultimately if that is up running and controlled you can start engaging with the target group.

This results in a large amount of people being influenced by a smaller group. Ultimately they have all been engaged with the brand by interacting or relating to the brand. It is been advised that the brand try to reach the bottom group of people in the pyramid without brands interacting with them directly. The goal is to generate expressions by consumers about the brand.
3.3 Conclusion
In this chapter we have seen marketing has changed. Marketers used to create brand preference by using the AIDA model. But the consumer’s decision journey has changed and the model became out-dated. The focus changed to an approach where aftersales and repeat purchases are more important. Marketers now try to extend the relationship with the consumer through acknowledgment, dialogue, incentivization, and activation. This results in consumers maintaining brand preference and becoming brand loyal.

Loyal consumers are not only more likely to rebuy a brand, they can also act as influencers to other consumers. The influential consumers can be divided in two groups of people; Mavens and Connectors. The impressions created by Mass Mavens and shared by Mass Connectors are crucial for brands. This because of the fact that consumers trust information and opinions posted online and rely on word of mouth in the decision-making process.

The marketer’s job is to identify the Mass Mavens and Connectors. Marketers have to activate and stimulate them and get them to recommend their brand to their friends and other consumers online. Now loyal consumers are turned into brand ambassadors.

The model presented creates an approach for marketers who want to start using Social Media in their marketing approach. In addition of the existing models, a four-pillar framework is added. The four pillars are: Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging.

By using this new approach, marketers will create a higher level of the desired state for a specific product to achieve the ultimate goal: a strong, positive, loyal bond between brand and consumer so the consumer will return to the brand and recommend it repeatedly.
four
Case study
This case study is written for TNT. The theory from the chapters two and three will be applied and brought into practice. TNT will have the opportunity to distinguish from competitors by using an advanced Social Media strategy. By listening TNT will familiarise them with their target group. By joining they will build a relationship with their customers. Energizing will turn the influential customers into brand ambassadors. By engaging TNT makes sure the brand ambassadors will create brand preference amongst other consumers in their network, creating new and loyal customers.

Overall, the case study will answer the question:

“How can TNT China use Social Media to increase brand preference in China?”
4.1.1 Brand

**TNT Express**
TNT Express is an international transportation company that moves 4.7 million parcels, documents, and pieces of freight every week to more than 200 countries. They operate air and road transportation networks in Europe, China, South America, the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East.

Founded in Australia after the Second World War, TNT went Dutch in 1992 following rapid international expansion. Their history is noteworthy for decisive acquisitions and a drive for excellence - factors that make TNT Express a unique and market-leading express company.

Today, the company employs 83,000 people and runs a fleet of about 30,000 road vehicles and 50 aircraft. It has more than 2,600 depots and sorting centres worldwide (July 2011).

TNT Express’ mission is to exceed customers’ expectations in the transfer of their goods and documents around the world and deliver value to their customers by providing the most reliable and efficient solutions in distribution and network management.

The core values of TNT Express are: to be passionate about their customers, care for people, keep promises and have a ‘can do’ mentality.

**TNT China**
TNT Express China, established in 1988 in China, is a part of TNT Express. Their main business is to provide international express and domestic road distribution services. For International Express services, TNT China has 34 branches and 5 international gateways. As a leading player in the Sino-Europe international express market, TNT has dedicated Boeing 747 freighters operating seven flights per week between Shanghai and Europe and five flights per week between Hong Kong and Europe.

For domestic road distribution, TNT manages the most extensive private road transportation network in China through TNT Hoau, its wholly owned subsidiary. TNT Hoau’s network consists of 57 operation hubs and 1,600 depots, covering over 600 cities in China. In February 2009, TNT Hoau pioneered the country’s first “Day-Definite” service, which now covers 29 major cities and 800 depots nationwide. TNT employs 21,000 professional employees in Mainland China.

The core values of TNT China are: to lead the industry by instilling pride in their people and sharing responsibility for our world.
4.1 Case study TNT

4.1.2 Target group
According to research conducted by TNT China, the target group of TNT China is male and female between 18 and 35 years old and they expect a high reliable service. Whereas males mostly prefer the parcel delivered on time, females prefer feeling that their delivery is safe and secure. Both would like the possibility of earning points for purchase transactions and, after good service, the price level is important. Time specific requirements are needed for a reliable service; the target group would like small parcels to be delivered to the office and big parcels need to be sent to their home address at a fixed time. Due to the highly competitive market people will switch vendors if they are disappointed or when the delivery service is bad.

4.1.3 Competitors
TNT competes in the offline market against six competitors: Sungfeng (SF), Zhai ji Song (ZJS), Yunda, Shentong (STO), Yuantong (YTO) and Lianbang (FedEx).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sungfeng Express</th>
<th>Zhai ji Song Express</th>
<th>Yunda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company information</td>
<td>Sung Feng is number one delivery company in China, in terms of on-time delivery, reliability, speed and service quality. They launched a GPS tracker on their parcel on route to delivering in 2011 (SF Express, 2011).</td>
<td>Zhai ji Song has a high speed home delivery with advanced service and good quality. They are a medium/high B2C player in China (ZJS Express, 2011).</td>
<td>Yunda has a medium delivery service focused on low prices. They are a medium B2C player (Yunda, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Shentong</td>
<td>Yuantong</td>
<td>Lianbang (FedEx)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company information</td>
<td>Shentong has an overall arrival and access service in Shanghai. They are a medium/high delivery service with a medium/low price (STO Express, 2011).</td>
<td>Yuantong has a perfect arrival and access service in most places in China. They are a medium player with the focus on medium service and low prices (YTO Express, 2011).</td>
<td>Lianbang is a Fedex unit group with a broad delivery in China and worldwide. They are a medium player in China with advanced service an medium/high prices (FedEx, 2011).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.4 Objective

Nowadays online shopping is bigger and more important for brands than ever before. TNT foresees a big market opportunity and will launch a new brand focused on the online market by delivering the parcels of products bought online.

The challenge is to become the most desired delivery service for small parcels of products bought online. They want to reach this target by creating awareness and brand preference on the Chinese Internet and, in turn, become the first choice of the market.
4.2 TNT and Social Media

4.2.1 Current state analysis
Outside of China TNT joined Twitter and Facebook to start conversations with their target group. During the month July in 2011, the Twitter account of TNT Express worldwide (Twitter, 2011) grew with 200 new followers from 2,400 to 2,600 followers at the end of July (TwitterCounter, 2011). Their company page on Facebook grew with 2,500 new fans during the month July of 2011. This results into a total fans amount of 17,500 fans on Facebook worldwide following their posted messages (Facebook, 2011).

TNT China joined the conversation together with Hoau on Sina Weibo and has reached a total amount of 3,000 fans (Sina Weibo, 2011). Kaixin001 has 469 fans (Kaixin001, 2011). These profiles are used to post news and facts related to TNT.

TNT China uses the Sina Weibo profile page ‘TNThoacampus’ to recruit new personnel. With a fans amount of 12,000 fans they successfully created a platform to recruit for new personnel (Sina Weibo, 2011).

As TNT will be included in the Social Media competitor analyses more information is found in section 4.2.3.
4.2.2 Competitor analysis

TNT China competes in the offline market against six competitors: Sungfeng (SF), Zhai ji Song (ZJS), Yunda, Shentong (STO), Yuantong (YTO) and Lianbang (FedEx).

The competition is analysed based on a scorecard as shown on the next page. Each competitor is reviewed on the amount of followers and activeness of communicates with their fans and followers. Based on this analyse a calculation of conversations times the amount of fans and is a Social Media approach score position given.

Liangbang (Fedex) scores the highest points with their communication approach on Social Network Sites in China. Laingbang scores 310452 points (based on the calculation of conversations x amount of fans). TNT is on the 6th position with a score of 4053.

1. Lianbang (Fedex)
2. Zhai ji Song
3. Yunda
4. Yuantong
5. Sungfeng
6. Hoau (TNT)
7. Shentong
4.2 TNT and Social Media

4.2.3 Scorecard

<table>
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(Statics are based on band’s official Social Network page, July 2011)

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| Zhai ji Song | Sina Weibo: [http://weibo.com/zjs001](http://weibo.com/zjs001)                         |
| Yunda        | Qzone: [http://user.qzone.qq.com/89467375](http://user.qzone.qq.com/89467375) (City: Zhuolu)  
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| Shentong     | Sina Weibo: [http://weibo.com/bjsto](http://weibo.com/bjsto)                            |
| Yuantong     | Qzone: [http://user.qzone.qq.com/63555895](http://user.qzone.qq.com/63555895)           |
|              | Sina Weibo: [http://weibo.com/yto2000528](http://weibo.com/yto2000528)                 |
| Lianbang (FedEx) | Sina Weibo: [http://weibo.com/fedexcht](http://weibo.com/fedexcht)  
                               | Kaixin 001: [http://www.kaixin001.com/fedex](http://www.kaixin001.com/fedex)         
                               | Douban: [http://www.douban.com/group/280393/](http://www.douban.com/group/280393/)    |
4.3 Increasing brand preference of TNT using Social Media
In this section TNT will be advised on how to increase brand preference by using Social Media. It is important for brands to have a good basis strategy for their Social Media approach. As discussed in chapter three the new consumer decision journey model is a good basis.

The model, shown on the left page, covers the complete consumer decision journey. In the context of this case it is assumed TNT has a clear understanding of the first four phases of the model. These phases represent the traditional AIDA model. Therefore the recommendations focus on explaining how to create loyal customers and brand ambassadors by using the four in section 3.2.4. newly introduced pillars on after sales: Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging.

When customers are turned into brand ambassadors they will make their peers aware of TNT’s products and services. Because brand ambassadors recommend TNT, the new potential customers are more interested. Because the information comes from a trusted source they will create a desire for the brand faster. Ultimately the recommendation shortens the consumer decision making journey, also because the influenced consideration set contains fewer brands.
4.3 Increasing brand preference of TNT using Social Media

Left: Top 10 TNT China fans in the last week by comments and re-posts and potential fans who commented and re-published TNT’s posts. Right: Top 10 most active fans of TNT China. (Sina Weibo, 2011)
4.3.1 Recommended listening strategy
It is advised that TNT should start listening to the customers of TNT Express worldwide. By finding out what people think about the brand of TNT Express, lessons could be learned how to approach the strategy in China.

By listening to conversations about Hoau, TNT learns how current customers think about their service. To find out how TNT can find opportunities it is been advised to not only focus on listening to conversations about Hoau itself but also listen to what has been said about the competitors Sung Feng, Zhai ji Song, Shen Tong, Yunda, Shentong, Yuantong, and Lianbang.

Tools to listen can range from sophisticated brand monitoring tools of research agencies such as CIC data or do-it-yourself tools as RSS readers, Google notifications. Some of the Social Media provide their own statistics such as Sina Weibo. The datacentre of Sina Weibo provides data, for instance the most active and influential fans a brands profile has got.

The two models on the left page can be used to find a brand’s most influential fans on Sina Weibo. Marketers can easily find out who the influential people are and whom they influence. With this data marketers can determine which people they should follow and start to learn about.

Example
An example comes from Lancôme, who did a good job by listening to their brand fans. By monitoring their target group on the right Social Media, they found a brand fan that composed a powerful poem about the brand Lancôme Rose. The poem inspired Lancôme’s “Rose Beauty” poetry campaign where they invited others to write their own poems. The campaign, in turn, inspired Internet users to compose their own couplets about the Lancôme Rose, which is now one of the most popular cosmetics BBS in China (Lancome, 2011) (Little Red Book, 2009).
4.3 Increasing brand preference of TNT using Social Media

4.3.2 Recommended joining strategy
Based on the comparison of the personas in section 2.3.4. and TNT’s target group, TNT should participate in the conversations on Kaixin001 and Sina Weibo more actively.

4.3.2.1 Kaixin001
Kaixin001 is a social game-oriented Social Network Site designed for young professionals between 19 and 35 years old with a white-collar job. This relates to TNT’s target group of young professional women. TNT’s target group has the same profile as most of the Kaixin001 users. Therefore, it is advised that TNT join Kaixin001 more actively to have conversations about daily lifestyle, fashion, and high value products that can be ordered online, which relates back to the delivery service of TNT.

4.3.2.2 Sina Weibo
Sina Weibo targets users from first-tier cities with a white collar job. This relates to the selection of TNT’s target group, which focuses on men who purchase high value products.

Therefore, it is advised that TNT should join Sina Weibo and have conversations about what is happening behind the scenes of TNT by sharing daily input such as news, pictures, videos and funny facts.

Example
The top three Western brands in China with active followers on Sina Weibo are Starbucks, Adidas and Zara (Little Red Book, 2011).
- Starbucks joins by letting their fans play a “find the difference” brand game that shows the products of Starbucks. Fans can give their answer by responding with the answer on the Starbucks site and winning the offered product (Sina Weibo, 2011).
- Adidas joins by having conversations about what their fans like. Instead of talking about Adidas, non-related topics such as about the music group Duck Fight Goose result into a huge amount of interaction between the brand and their fans (Sina Weibo, 2011).
- Zara joins by reposting messages about what people think about them. They are not scared to have conversations with their fans and post messages about pictures their fans have posted such as: “Beach dress, good choice!” (Sina Weibo, 2011).

These brands have managed to collect a substantial amount of influential fans who are active and participating online. Through the brand’s creative campaigns they improved their digital experience through their Sina Weibo accounts.
4.3.3 Recommended energizing strategy

In the second part of the model, joining, it has been advised that TNT use Sina Weibo and Kaixin001 to join conversations with their fans. By using Sina Weibo as a communication channel, TNT can find out who the most influential fans are.

By joining the conversation with the most influential people who use the brand and their fans, TNT can start to create a relationship with the target group. Energizing them by giving rewards and credit means that they will become a salesperson and recommend the TNT brand to their friends. The rewards for example can be given by simply say thank you to the followers when they said something positive about the brand. Rewarding could also been done by reposting and responding on messages of fans and followers.

Example

Miffy, a world famous rabbit cartoon from the Netherlands, is active on Sina Weibo, writing messages about daily activities and creating a relationship with her friends. For her birthday the brand Miffy started a campaign. Miffy did send out a message to all fans asking them to send her a birthday present. With 12,000 followers on Sina Weibo, Miffy reached an estimated 70,000 people who reposted and commented on her message.

After activating her fans on Sina Weibo and Qzone, Miffy received 200 birthday presents from her most loyal fans. After receiving the birthday presents the brand rewarded all the people who sent a present by sending a present back and energized them to share the present with their friends. The 200 most loyal fans shared a picture or message about the received present from Miffy. As such, these loyal fans strongly influenced their friends’ opinions about the brand Miffy (Note: Miffy is an Energize client) (Weibo, 2011).
4.3 Increasing brand preference of TNT using Social Media
4.3.4 Recommended engaging strategy

To create more engagement, TNT could create an engagement campaign with the focus the four pillars discussed in this section. For example, TNT could start a reward system based on ‘mail points’. The ‘mail points’, for instance, can be earned by posting the TNT account number and trace number of the shipment. Bonus points are earned when placed in the weekly top 10 of TNT’s most active fans, discussed in section 4.3.2.

The loyalty system should be designed from moving along the four pillars of the new consumers decision journey. The example given above is given based on the fact that TNT listened and knows that their target groups likes to participate in loyalty programs. Because TNT runs the campaign actively, they start to join the conversation with their target group. TNT constantly energizes the consumers because they receive rewards and gaining more points by using TNT as a mailing service more often.

This kind of campaign also encourages influential Internet users to discuss and activate their friends to use TNT’s services. By gaining on their participation, the message is spread further by the people with the most influence. It gives TNT the opportunity to distinguish themselves from competitors.

Example

The example comes from online clothing retailer Vancl, who successfully launched its engagement campaign in summer 2010. The campaign encouraged potential consumers to take an already popular Vancl advertisement, Photoshop their own version, and share it online with their friends. The underlying premise is that the original idea focuses on the popularity of the Photoshop-related behaviour of Chinese Internet users. The main ingredient of this is an easy format to copy, and a simple starting point to spread on the Internet (Little Red Book, 2010).

The premise is simple: consumers, having invested time in producing something, will try their best to show all their friends, thus spreading the brand’s message in the process. Either that, or they are offered incentive to do so in the form of a competition.

Another example comes from Nescafe, who started an inspiration campaign to engage with the target group. A RenRen-based mini-site was created to target students with a variety of activities, giving them the chance to win various prizes and one of 100,000 goodie bags. Participants could share their own song, which they composed with a keyboard-controlled piano, and cartoon strips, which they could draw by filling in blank text fields. By giving an opportunity for low-barrier-to-entry creation, and providing attainable incentives, they are making their messages very tempting to share and in doing so have guaranteed a degree of virality (Asia Digital Map, 2011).

Brands are now taking this further and making it easier for consumers to engage with them, thereby lowering the barriers of sharing.
4.4 Conclusion
In this chapter the Social Media performance of TNT China has been reviewed. By using a scorecard with the focus on the biggest Social Network Sites China offers, TNT and their competitors have been rated.

In comparison with their six direct competitors TNT China have a mediocre performance with their communication on Social Networks. A remarkable fact is that TNT China scores high points with their personnel recruitment on Sina Weibo. TNT China now has to focus more on their loyal customers who can be used as brand ambassadors for its brand.

It is recommended that TNT China should use the ‘New consumers decision journey’-model. The models four pillars, Listening, Joining, Energizing, and Engaging, are a good basis for TNT China’s Social Media strategy. A strategy based on these four pillars will create more loyal customers and brand ambassadors. When brand ambassadors recommend TNT, new potential customers are interested faster. Information that comes from a trusted source will increase the desire for the brand sooner. Ultimately the recommendation shortens the consumer decision-making journey, also because the influenced consideration set contains fewer brands.

Therefore, it is been advised that TNT China should give their loyal customers the opportunity to share their recommendations of the brand. TNT China should provide an easy way to share their recommendations with an engagement campaign with Social Media included. When loyal customers turn into brand ambassadors and share recommendations with their friends they create a brand preference. Which ultimately turns customers into salespeople and let them sell TNT as a brand to their friends.
Bibliography
Appendix 2.3 Extended overview of Social Network Sites in China

Qzone
Features: Instant Messaging, Online Video, and Site Search

RenRen
Equivalent: Facebook - Launched: Dec 2005 - Target: Students, white collar
Features: Chat, Group buy, Location-Based Services, Online Video

Pengyou
Equivalent: Facebook - Launched Pengyou (QQ Alumni): 2009 - Target: Students from rural areas and white collar workers.
Features: Instant Messaging, Online Video, and Site SearchTop

Kaixin001
Equivalent: Facebook, focused on games - Launched: March 2008 Target: White-collar
Reg. Users: ~95mn (TechRice Estimate, March 2011) - Active Users: ~40mn (IResearch iUserTracker, March 2011)
Features: IM, Group buy, Online Video, Site Search

51.com
Reg. Users: ~179 MN - Active Users: ~40mn (TechRice Estimate, March 2011)
Features: Instant Messaging, Online Video, and Site Search

Douban
Reg. Users: ~40mn - Active Users: ~20mn (TechRice Estimate, March 2011)
Features: Community, Group discussion, Music and Movie database

Sina Weibo (Micro blog)
Equivalent: Twitter, Facebook - Launched: Aug. 2009 - Target: White-collars
Features: Instant Messaging, Social Network Site, Group Buy, Location-Based Services, Online Video, and Search
Appendix 2.2 The six levels of the Social Techno Graphics Ladder by Forrester

Segment includes consumers participating at least one of the indicated activities at least monthly.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

Appendix 3.1 The consumer decision journey of McKinsey

The consumer decision journey

1. The consumer considers an initial set of brands, based on brand perceptions and exposure to recent touch points.

2. Consumers add or subtract brands as they evaluate what they want.

3. Ultimately, the consumer selects a brand at the moment of purchase.

4. After purchasing a product or service, the consumer builds expectations based on experience to inform the next decision journey.