

The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Strategies of
Residential Real Estate Agencies and Portals in Ireland

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Residential Real Estate Agencies and Portals in Ireland

- MBA Dissertation: Qualitative Research -

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Declaration

This dissertation is being submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MBA in Marketing. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged in the bibliography.

Signed: Kinga Nemeth V.

Date: August 12, 2013

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Abstract

The growing importance of mobile marketing can be clearly seen in most industries; however, no qualitative or quantitative research has been conducted on this topic in relation to the real estate industry. The underlying study investigates the impact of mobile marketing on the marketing strategies of Irish residential real estate agencies and property portals through qualitative research. Although this study is based on a small nonprobability sample (and for this reason, the findings of the research cannot be generalized), it aims at providing the real estate industry with useful in-depth information on current marketing trends. After providing a theoretical overview of mobile marketing, marketing strategies, integrated marketing communications, and relationship marketing, four companies – three agencies and one property portal – have been interviewed in order to obtain answers to all research questions. The study investigates factors that influence the implementation of mobile marketing and identifies the main forms of mobile marketing used in the residential real estate industry. Additionally, the paper also provides initial exploration into how mobile marketing may be integrated into the marketing communication strategy and how it may affect the relationship marketing of residential real estate agencies and portals in Ireland. The findings present several conceptual and contextual insights into the position of mobile marketing in the industry. The study includes conclusions and recommendations as well as suggestions for further research.

1 Introduction

The content of this chapter includes the discussion of the background of the dissertational topic, the aim of the research, including its scope and limitations, as well as the organization of the dissertation.

1.1 Rationale for Undertaking This Topic

Mobile marketing is becoming the most important marketing channel due to advancements in technology. According to Huang (2011), mobile marketing receives a higher response rate compared with other marketing approaches; therefore, it is in the best interest of all businesses to implement mobile marketing into their marketing strategies. Ian Carrington (2010), mobile advertising sales director at Google, also suggests that mobile phones have stimulated the fastest global diffusion of any technology, and for this reason, marketers should respond to such opportunity.

The purpose of this study is to assess the degree to which the real estate industry in Ireland is responding to opportunities to promote residential properties through mobile marketing. The real estate industry, in general, has not been the main focus for marketing researchers, especially with regard to mobile marketing. There are few academic studies on real estate information technology (e.g., Dermisi, 2010) and online advertising (Bond *et al.* 2000); however, as of this date, apart from an article written by Precourt (2011), there has been no academic journal or quantitative or qualitative research published on mobile marketing in this context.

1.2 Aim of the Research

The aim of this qualitative research is to draw attention to the importance of mobile marketing and analyze its current role in the Irish residential real estate industry. The study aims at identifying the reasons behind the implementation and integration of mobile marketing and what forms of mobile marketing real estate agencies and portals may use.

The research also inquires into how mobile marketing may affect the relationship marketing of residential real estate agencies and portals in Ireland. While two studies refer to the importance of the mobile channel as an essential tool for relationship marketing (Steinbock, 2006; Lee and Engelman, 2012), there has been no qualitative research focusing on the area.

1.3 Research Methodology and Scope

As the purpose of this study is to gather and analyze sufficient and detailed, in-depth data about current mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry, this research employs qualitative techniques. Because of research and time limitations, the author focuses on a small sample size chosen with a nonprobability-based method through purposive selection. The study, therefore, is based on four individual case studies, each put together after interviewing three real estate agencies and one property portal in Ireland.

1.4 Research Limitations

While it is believed that this study will create a good understanding of the importance of mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry, because of time limitations and the small nonprobability sample, findings cannot be generalized and are not representative. There are four main limiting factors influencing the research, all of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3: time frame, sample size, personal bias, and the author's professional background. All limitations may question the validity and reliability of the research; however, the main purpose of this study is not to generalize but rather to seek understanding of the topic from the perspectives of experts in the residential real estate industry.

1.5 Contributions of the Study

The study aims at targeting marketers in the residential real estate industry; however, the author of this study is confident that the findings will benefit a wide range of businesses as the topic is current and relevant for most industries. “Despite all of the opportunities made available by mobile media, the potential of mobile marketing has not been fully exploited” (Smutkupt *et al.*, 2010). For this reason, apart from providing specific real estate information and suggestions, this study also aims at highlighting the importance of mobile marketing in general. “The size of the mobile marketplace and its continuing explosive growth makes it critical that businesses realize the unique characteristics of mobile users and their appliances to gain greater market penetration and create new, broader market opportunities” (Troutman and Timpson, 2008).

1.6 The Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is broken down into several chapters that are organized into paragraphs to ensure logical consistency. The literature review in Chapter 2 touches on the following topics: mobile marketing (e.g., MMA, 2009; Huang, 2011 and 2012; Miller, 2013), promotional mix of mobile marketing (e.g., Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008; Smutkupt *et al.*, 2010), relationship marketing and management (e.g., Rehman *et al.*, 2012; Koi-Akrofi *et al.*, 2013), integration of mobile marketing into the overall marketing strategy (e.g., Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008; McDermott, 2011; Lee and Engelman, 2012), integrated marketing communications (e.g., Shimp *et al.*, 2010), and last but not least the literature framing the context. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the research, including the method of data collection and analysis, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of this study. Chapter 4 includes the findings based on four individual case studies and a cross-case analysis. Chapter 5 answers the research questions and includes the conclusions and recommendations. This is followed by Chapter 6, where the author will provide suggestions for further research. Chapter 7, the last chapter in the dissertation, will give an overview of the author’s self-reflection regarding her own learning and performance throughout the dissertation process.

2 Literature Review

In order to explore the mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry, it is indispensable to understand the theoretical background of the topic. The aim of this chapter is to identify literature gaps by reviewing and evaluating previous relevant academic literature and additional sources. Topics covered in this chapter include mobile and digital marketing, relationship marketing, integrated marketing communications, and marketing strategies.

2.1 Mobile Marketing

2.1.1 *Definition of Mobile Marketing*

Mobile marketing, along with online marketing and social marketing, is part of the digital marketing sector (Miller *et al.*, 2013). Mobile marketing promotes goods, services, and ideas by providing customers with personalized, location- and time-sensitive information using interactive wireless media (Ancarani and Shankar, 2003, cited in Shankar, 2012; Dickinger *et al.*, 2004). Unlike any other marketing channel, mobile marketing has a direct link to end users, which allows marketers to reach each customer directly (Steinbock, 2006). According to Krum (2010), there are four distinctive advantages of mobile marketing: personalization, portability, interactivity, and persistency; while Smutkupt *et al.* (2010) suggest that mobile marketing is fueled by the unique advantages of ubiquity, personalization, two-way communication, and localization.

Leppäniemi *et al.* (2008) define mobile marketing as, “the use of the mobile medium as a means of marketing communications.” According to Shankar and Balasubramanian (2009, cited in Shankar, 2012), mobile marketing is “the two-way or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device or technology.” This study, however, adopts the definition proposed by the Mobile Marketing Association (MMA, 2009), who point out the most

important characteristics and capabilities of mobile marketing: relevant, engaging, interactive, and mobile. According to MMA, mobile marketing is “a set of practices that enables companies to communicate and engage with their audience in an interactive and relevant manner through any mobile device or network.” The “set of practices” mentioned in the definition refers to the different activities (promotions, information sharing, direct response, customer service offerings, etc.) by which marketers deliver marketing messages to recipients (MMA, 2009), combining push and pull marketing activities (Raymond Yiwen Huang, 2011). Push mobile marketing activities may include sending text messages, e-mails, and other advertising proactively, while pull mobile marketing is defined by MMA as any content sent upon request by the subscriber. Jelassi *et al.* (2004) mention a third delivery option: the dialogue. Dialogues help marketers “identify a customer, retain that customer for a lifetime, while growing the value of the customer to the marketer” (Steinbock, 2006). The main aim of a dialogue campaign is to create a long-term relationship with customers in order to get extensive information about them (Jelassi *et al.*, 2004). The dialogue approach for mobile marketing can therefore also improve relationship marketing. There is a set of activities marketers can undertake to perform a mobile marketing campaign, combining push, pull, and dialogue marketing activities. Marketers, however, need to ensure that the expectations for permission and acceptance are always met.

2.1.2 Promotional Mix of Mobile Marketing

Promotion is a central element of the marketing mix (Hughes and Fill, 2007) that is a combination of tactical marketing tools, including four main elements: product, place, price, and promotion (Richins *et al.* 1987; Kotler and Armstrong, 2006). This list has been extended by three other elements with regard to services: process, people and physical evidence (Smutkupt *et al.*, 2010). Out of the seven elements, this study focuses on the promotion element and the promotional mix. Promotional mix may include personal selling, sales promotions, advertising, and public relations (Self *et al.*, 1987). In terms of mobile marketing, the main elements of the promotional mix are online advertising, promotions, and direct marketing (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). There

are several mobile interaction options when it comes to mobile marketing, including SMS, MMS, emails, mobile websites, downloaded or preloaded applications, mobile search, mobile display ads, social media networks, in-video products, in-game products, QR codes, and many more (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). Depending on the type of business and its marketing goal, a company may use one or a combination of these channels and tools. Based on the primary data gathered by the author, the following mobile marketing options are relevant in the real estate industry, none of which have been studied by academics in the context of real estate industry: mobile applications, mobile-optimized websites, online/mobile advertising, social media on mobile devices, QR codes, and SMS and e-mail communications. In order to be effective, all the above require sufficient mobile technology, wireless network, and good infrastructure (Dincer, 2011).

Mobile Applications (Apps)

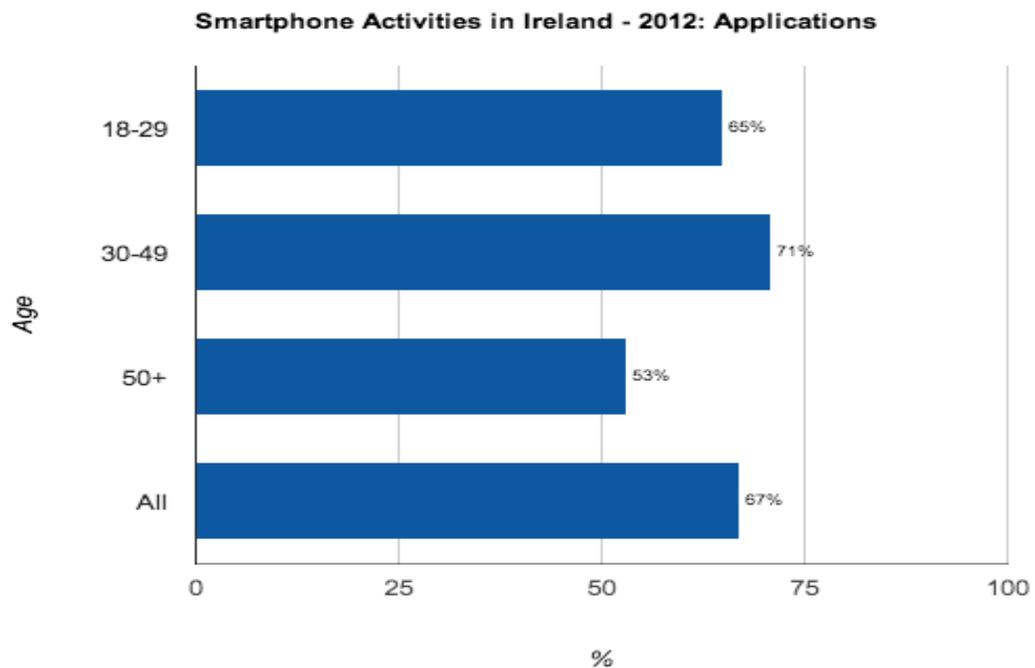


Chart 1 Smartphone Activities in Ireland: Application Use, 2012;
Source: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/mobileplanet

Mobile applications are software that run on mobile devices, including smartphones and tablets. Mobile applications can be pre-loaded or downloaded from distribution platforms (e.g., Google Play, Apple App Store). Based on the statistics provided by Google (2012), 67% of smartphone users use applications. Wang *et al.* (2013) point out that based on Gartner forecasting (2011), there will be over 185 billion applications downloaded from app stores by the end of 2014. “Mobile applications range from game applications, maps, news, and social networking, to sophisticated business transactions” (Redouane, 2013).

The aim of most marketers is to provide customers with a tool that they will use on a regular basis or with intensity (Quinton, 2012). According to the report written by Brian Quinton (chiefmarketer.com, 2012), 37% of the survey participants (marketers) offered or planned to offer at least one smartphone app in 2012. The demand for applications is high, and more and more users now rely on mobile applications.

Mobile-Optimized Websites

As the number of smartphone users is starting to exceed PC users in many countries, the optimization of PC-based websites for mobile devices becomes increasingly important. According to Troutman and Timpson (2008), mobile-optimized sites provide “comprehensive capabilities” to smartphone users. There are two main things to consider when optimizing a PC-based site for mobile devices: format and content. The website needs to fit the screen of mobile devices with well-positioned navigation buttons and full graphic and streaming media capabilities (Troutman and Timpson, 2008). The quality of the content is just as important. Users would like to be able to access important information from their mobile devices as well. However, all the information that is available on the PC-based website might be overwhelming on mobile devices; therefore, simplifying the content can create better user experience. According to a report by Brian Quinton (chiefmarketer.com, 2012), about 31% of marketers have the website of their companies optimized for mobile devices, while 17% of the marketers have a separate version of their websites developed for mobile devices. However, 39% of marketers have neither a mobile website nor a mobile-optimized website, and out of those, 36% said that

it was due to budget limitations, 26% said that it was the lack of initiative and 26% of the users did not believe that their target audience was on mobile.

QR Code

QR codes or quick response codes are black-and-white two-dimensional barcodes that act as shortcuts for mobile input (Hampton *et al.*, 2011; Jung *et al.*, 2012; Okazaki *et al.*, 2012). QR codes can be scanned by smartphones and any other phone with a camera once a mobile application for scanning is downloaded. Some suggest that the need to complete several technical tasks before they can first scan a QR code (e.g., go to an app store, download an app, figure out how to scan) can be discouraging for users. The findings of Jung *et al.* (2012) imply that for the above reasons, marketers need to focus on targeting those customers who already have confidence in using QR codes. Hampton *et al.* (2011), however, point out that the latest smartphones now come with preinstalled QR code-reading capabilities, which will reduce the disadvantages and help with the ease of use.

Marketers can embed different types of media linking to website URLs, e-mail addresses, and various other content. “The primary benefit of QR code is its pivotal role as a bridge between offline and mobile media in multichannel marketing” (Okazaki *et al.*, 2012). While a study carried out by Okazaki states that most users would scan QR codes for promotional offers, coupons, and product samples, according to Jung *et al.* (2012), marketers with high-involvement products (cars, computers, etc.) should also use QR codes, as those consumers who are planning to invest in an expensive products will use the code in order to access deep and meaningful information. Based on a report published by comScore in 2012, the QR code usage doubled among European smartphone users from 2011 to 2012, and now three out of four QR scans result in requests for product information.

Social Media Tools on Mobile Devices

Social media tools, such as chat rooms, blogs, and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), have provided marketers with efficient ways of reaching their target audiences (Trusov *et al.*, 2009). Tools should be chosen based on the social media habits of participants and the trends in the given market (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). Social networks are a part of users' day-to-day lives, and therefore the integration of these tools can increase campaign effectiveness.

Social media tools can be accessed from mobile devices through mobile apps and mobile-optimized websites. Based on the statistics provided by Google (2012), almost 70% of smartphone users in Ireland access their social network accounts from their mobile devices on a daily basis.

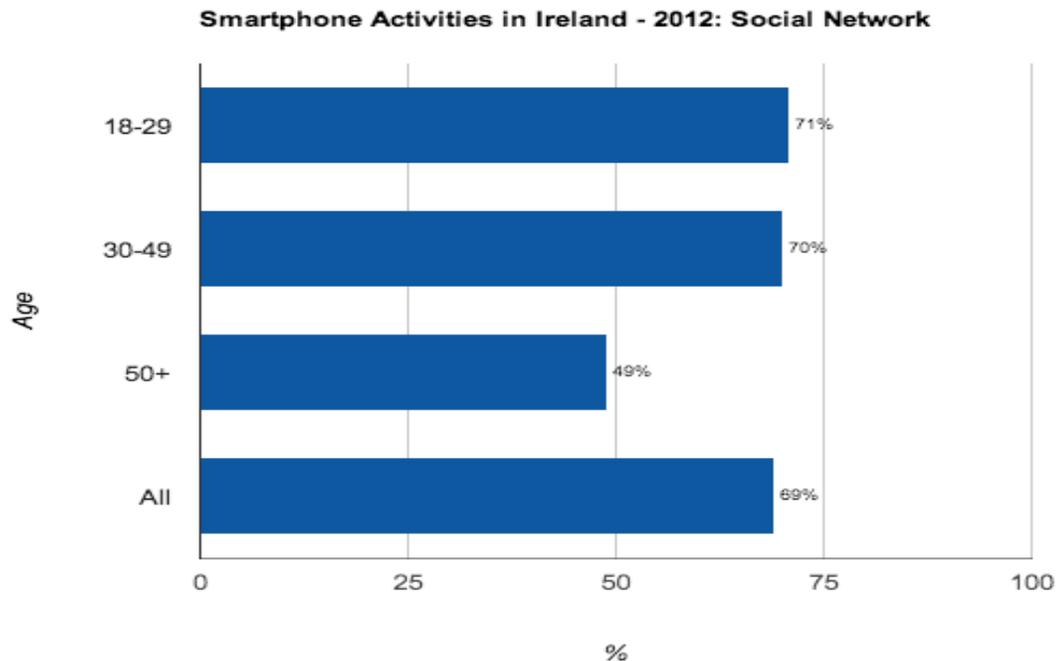


Chart 2 Smartphone Activities in Ireland: Social Network, 2012;
Source: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/mobileplanet

According to the marketing research by socialmediaexplorer.com (2011), nearly nine in ten real estate professionals use social media to sell homes. The top three social media resources among real estate agents and realtors are Facebook (79%), Twitter (48%) and LinkedIn (29%).

Facebook allows users to stay connected with friends and family, share their stories and photos, express their interests, follow brands, etc. There are approximately 1.11 billion registered users, out of which 655 million users use Facebook on a daily basis (Facebook site, March 2013). With over 200 million monthly users, Twitter is a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions and news. “Twitter connects businesses to customers in real time—and businesses use Twitter to quickly share information with people interested in their products and services, gather real-time market intelligence and feedback, and build relationships with customers, partners and influencers” (Twitter site, 2013). LinkedIn operates the world’s largest professional network on the Internet, with more than 225 million members in over 200 countries and territories (LinkedIn site, 2013). All three social networks offer mobile applications; therefore, their users can access their accounts from anywhere at any time as long as they have Internet connection.

SMS/E-mail Communications

Direct marketing is defined by Kotler *et al.* (2005) as “direct communications with carefully targeted individual customers to obtain an immediate response and to cultivate lasting customer relationships.” Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008) suggest that direct marketing refers to personalized, permission-based messages targeting mobile devices. Permission-based marketing is mainly adopted by those companies that have digital marketing integrated in their strategies (Farris, 2001). SMS (short message service) and e-mail can both be used for permission-based messaging.

SMS provides marketers with the opportunity to deliver short messages to mobile phones, allowing them to reach customers in an instant. According to Wouters and

Wetzels (2006), SMS should be used as a complementary marketing communications instrument, and campaigns that include an SMS element tend to show better results than those campaigns without an SMS element.

E-mail marketing is a cost-effective one-to-one medium that can build and strengthen customer relations (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). E-mail is an interactive channel that can be used to attract new customers, maintain current customers, and build brand loyalty by sending e-mails on product descriptions, special offers, attachments and links to websites. According to the Bluecast Digital (2012), “Email is an indispensable channel for Irish marketers to enable them to sustain relationships with their core audiences”. Based on the survey carried out by Bluecast Digital (2012), 94% of Irish marketers use e-mails for maintaining customer relationships, and 84% believe that email is an important or very important component of marketing strategies. A total of 54.7% of the respondents consider mobile emails as the biggest opportunity for success, and statistics provided by Google (2012) suggest that they may be right, as 67% of the Irish population access their e-mails through smartphones on a daily basis.

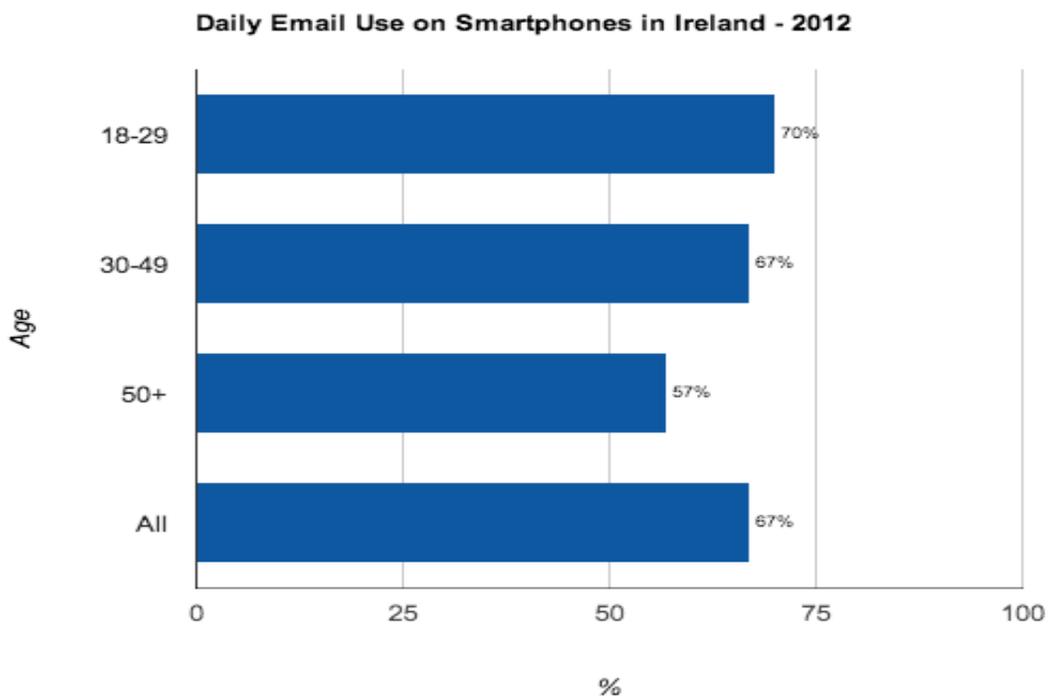


Chart 3 Daily E-mail Use on Smartphones in Ireland, 2012;
Source: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/mobileplanet

Online/Mobile Advertising

Businesses have been focusing more on expanding their online marketing campaigns beyond the traditional media channels (Cuneo, 2006). According to Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008), mobile advertising can be classified into five main categories: web (mobile internet, banner ads, search, mobile websites, etc.), broadcast (mobile broadcast radio, streamed mobile TV, etc.); narrowcast (mobilecasting, bluecasting via Bluetooth transmitter, etc.), physical browsing, and the so-called other category for those options that do not fit into any of the above (in-game ads, ringback tones, etc.). One of the key features of online advertising is personalization (Lee and Benbasat, 2003). Advertising can be personalized based on demographic, location, purchasing behavior, and situation (Kim and Jun, 2008).

Google is one of the most powerful companies offering online and mobile advertising solutions, including search, display, and video ads. Google Mobile Ads can help businesses reach their audiences through mobile devices in search results, in mobile applications and videos, and on the display network. “Whether you’re focused on performance advertising, or building a brand, mobile is key to reaching your audience. Research shows that 90% of people move between devices to accomplish a goal, so reaching customers on-the-go is more important than ever before” (Google, 2013).

2.2 Marketing Strategies

2.2.1 Mobile Marketing Strategies

“Marketing strategy is a cornerstone of firm’s all marketing activities” (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). According to Richins *et al.* (1987), marketing strategy serves two purposes: one is to help firms determine the nature of their business, and the other is to help businesses allocate their resources in order to succeed in the given market. Due to new technologies, companies now explore new opportunities in forming marketing

products or services (Bamba and Barnes, 2007). One of these opportunities is mobile marketing.

According to McDermott (2011), a survey by the Mobile Marketing Association and ANA Magazine show that about 90% of marketers include or plan to include mobile marketing in their overall strategy. Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto (2008), however, suggest however that “mobile marketing is too often implemented at ad hoc basis and the link between company’s marketing strategy and individual mobile marketing campaign is very weak or perhaps even missing completely.” According to Okazaki (2008), the adoption of mobile marketing is influenced by two main factors: environmental and managerial. The effectiveness of mobile marketing strategies depend on the ability of businesses to manage mobile technologies and make use of all the features. Businesses and marketers “should closely monitor advancements, look for new possibilities, and integrate them into their marketing strategy” (Smutkupt *et al.*, 2010).

2.2.2 Integrated Marketing Communications

Kliatchko (2005) defines integrated marketing communications (IMC) as “the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centered and result-driven brand communication programs over time.” Kliatchko (2008) later revisits the definition and suggests, “IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication.” The main difference between the two definitions is that the latter one highlights the importance of the “audience-driven” factor. The author of this study agrees that audience-driven marketing communications are the key to a successful marketing campaign.

Marketing strategy drives IMC planning, and communicators with an IMC approach will take into consideration all forms of communication and delivery channels (Leppäniemi and Karjaluoto, 2008). In order for businesses to be successful, they need to focus on taking advantage of the mobile medium (Watson *et al.*, 2002) The mobile device is a very important channel when it comes to reaching consumers, as customers always carry their

mobile phones with them (Stafford and Faber, 2005); therefore, it is of high importance that marketers integrate mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategy, with special attention to integrated marketing communications. In order to be effective, mobile marketing should be integrated with other media channels and used to complement traditional marketing (Ferris, 2007; Lee and Engelman, 2012). The mix of channels allows businesses to communicate their messages clearly and consistently (Willis, 2012, cited in Lee and Engelman, 2012). According to the author, the best strategy for content channel integration is to optimize content, encourage multichannel engagement and balance the relative strengths of each medium while creating links between channels to reinforce one another.

Kotler et al (2005) argues that the best combination of promotional tools depends on the type of business, product, market, product lifecycle, and the buyer-readiness stage. The main purpose of IMC is to lead customers through these stages by providing a consistent and clear message. According to the article ‘Hierarchy of Effects Model’ written by Clow *et al.* (2005, 90–91.), there are six stages of buyer readiness, including awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. Mobile technology allows marketers to connect with consumers at any stage, and therefore Karaatli *et al.* (2010) suggest that mobile marketing can act as external cues that help trigger a decision-making process in customers. On the other hand, Leppäniemi and Karjaluo (2008) argue that mobile marketing works best among the target audience that is close to making a purchase.

2.3 Relationship Marketing

2.3.1 Relationship Marketing via Mobile Devices

The term “relationship marketing” was first introduced by Berry in 1983 (Steinbock, 2006), according to whom the purpose of relationship marketing is to build, maintain and strengthen the relationship between businesses and their customers, creating and enhancing values for both (Kotler and Armstrong, 2006). Relationship marketing focuses

on the understanding of the needs and wants of customers through their lifecycle (Koi-Akrofi *et al.*, 2013). As opposed to other forms of marketing, relationship marketing recognizes the long-term value of customer relationships and extends communication beyond advertising and promotions (Koi-Akrofi *et al.*, 2013). “The relationship marketing process involves an iterative cycle of knowledge acquisition, customer differentiation, and customization of the entire marketing mix” (Moon, 2002).

Tactics for relationship marketing can be divided into three parts: individualization, continuity and personalization (Rehman *et al.*, 2012). Due to its individualized and personalized nature, relationship marketing tactics were originally used for business-to-business communication (Aminu, 2012); however, the current information and communication technologies allow marketers to implement relationship marketing for the mass market using personalized one-to-one communication on mobile devices. While two studies refer to the importance of the mobile channel as an essential tool for relationship marketing (Steinbock, 2006; Lee and Engelman, 2012) and Steinbock provides an argument on how mobile marketing is providing marketers with new opportunities for building relationships with their customers, there has been no qualitative research carried out focusing on the area. One of the aims of this study is to examine how mobile marketing may impact the relationship-building process. Friedrich *et al.* (2009) claim that mobile devices are the best tools for customer relationship management.

2.3.2 Customer Relationship Management

Customer relationship management (CRM) has been defined as a strategic approach by several academic authors (Kotler, 1997; Buttle, 2001; Bull, 2003; Liu, 2007), although according to Foss *et al.* (2008), a consensus on the definition cannot be reached due to the broad variety of CRM project types available. This study adopts the definition suggested by Toggler (2008) who states that customer relationship management is a business strategy that is meant to develop customer relationship and satisfy customers’ needs while optimizing profitability. “A truly effective CRM strategy requires you to get personal, to understand your customers’ preferences and to ensure that these preferences

are reflected in how you communicate with your customer, each and every time” (Ecatarina, 2008). CRM is built on relationship marketing (Moon, 2002) and may involve customer service strategies, marketing strategies, other business processes and IT activities. While CRM can be difficult to implement (Elmuti *et al.*, 2009), a lot of businesses initiate the approach for various reasons (Elmuti *et al.*, 2009). According to the author’s survey, the top general reasons for undertaking CRM include the following: to improve customer services, to improve profitable relationship with clients, to match processes to customer needs, and to retain customer base and increase acquisitions. Building long-term relationships with customers is also important and a well-implemented CRM system has the potential to facilitate this.

CRM systems are technology-based management tools that can help a company manage strategic initiatives (Dyche, 2002, cited by Shanks *et al.* 2008) and customer relationship effectively as long as the company has the competence in knowledge management and relationship marketing (Castronovo and Huang, 2012). According to Payne and Frow (2005), among other factors, successful implementation of a CRM system requires effective change management, project management and employee engagement. A research carried out by Shanks *et al.* (2008) suggests that while CRM systems are mainly implemented to support marketing, sales, and customer service functions, there is an increased need in certain markets for more innovative CRM solutions, reaching beyond these functionalities. Foss *et al.* (2008) list a variety of CRM system project types that are used by various markets and industries, depending on their objectives: (1) customer data and analytics (e.g., marketing databases, data warehouse, customer segmentation) (2) marketing and campaign management (e.g., marketing via email) (3) distribution channels (e.g., partner management, contact centers) (4) research and analytics (e.g., customer journey mapping) (5) distribution management (e.g., online chat) and many more.

In order to have a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive economy, more and more companies invest in CRM systems and strategies. There is a wide range of options for CRM systems these days. Companies may buy off-the-shelf products or

develop customized ones. Many CRM systems are now cloud-based and therefore accessible from anywhere at any time. There are various software available for the real estate industry as well.

2.4 Literature Framing the Context

2.4.1 Residential Real Estate Industry in Ireland

According to the Irish Residential Report by Sherry FitzGerald (2012), “2012 has proven to be a noteworthy year for the Irish residential market and a turning point after five consecutive years of contracting house prices, giving positive signals of an emerging stabilisation of the market.” According to Lisney’s Industry Review (2012), the property business remains challenging; however, there are signs of improvement, and conditions in Dublin have improved significantly over the last year: “Buyer sentiment was at its highest levels in six years.”

The “Irish Residential Report” by Sherry FitzGerald suggests that the residential market has begun to stabilize in locations where supply is most constrained. Based on the Central Statistics Office Ireland (Global Property Guide, 2012), the demand has begun to increase over the last year and the “total transactions increased 17% in the first three quarters of 2012.” The Sherry FitzGerald report points out that prices have risen for the first time since 2006. Now the strongest performance in terms of activity has been in Dublin, followed by Galway and Cork, with growing demand from investors, owner-occupiers, and first-time buyers, which could generate a further uplift in prices (Sherry FitzGerald, 2012). The outlook by Lisney (2012) suggests that prices in prime Dublin areas will likely to increase by at least 5% in 2013; however, the number of properties for sale will likely to remain constrained. The report by Sherry FitzGerald also confirms that the market has witnessed a strong uplift in transactions and a tightening of supply. “Looking ahead the market may begin to see demand outweighing supply in key residential areas with lower levels of available housing stock.” (Sherry FitzGerald, 2012). The

performance of the rest of the country still has not picked up, yet, and it may vary on a county-by-county basis.

2.4.2 Mobile Marketing Trends in Ireland

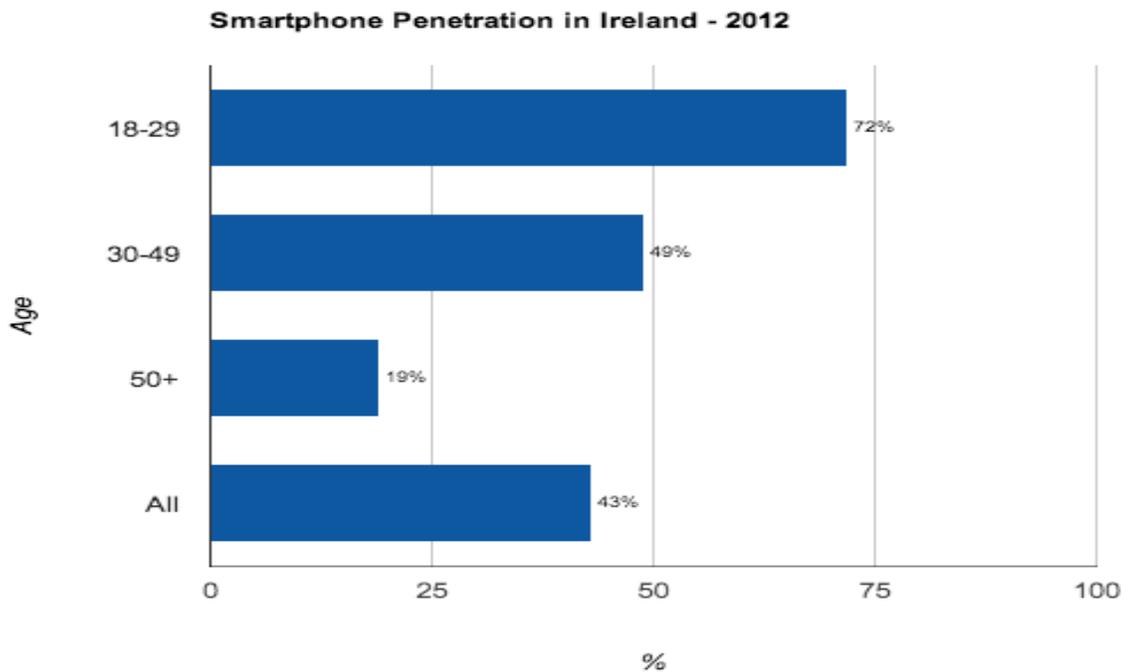


Chart 4 Smartphone Penetration in Ireland, 2012;
Source: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/mobileplanet

The use of mobile phones has been expanding tremendously around the world, and Ireland is no exception. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Information Technology Report for 2012-2013, Ireland ranks 25th on the Networked Readiness Index. Based on a report by ZenithOptimedia (2012), Digital Times (2013) predicts that by 2015, Ireland will be the third most “digitally engaged” country across 19 Western European countries (May 2013). The mobile penetration rate of Ireland is comparable to other EU countries and stood at 121.75% in 2011. The total number of mobile subscribers grew by 4.29% in 2011. In the same year, around 77% of the Irish population (or 3.48 million individuals) used the Internet (MarketLine, 2012). According to Ipsos OTX

MediaCT and Google, the smartphone penetration in Ireland was at 43% at the beginning of 2012.

According to Google (2012), smartphone owners are becoming increasingly reliant on their mobile devices, and therefore, businesses should extend their advertising strategies to include mobile and integrate cross-media campaigns. In their 2012 EMEA Mobile Research Paper, iProspect suggests that the global Internet usage will more than double by 2015, and most of these users will be on mobile.

2.4.3 Mobile Marketing Trends in the Real Estate Industry

The statistics in the previous section justify the importance of the Internet and mobile technologies; and therefore it is believed that mobile marketing should be the main focus for all businesses, including residential real estate agencies.

Based on an article ‘How iAd and iPad are driving a real estate business’ written by Geoffrey Precourt (2011), Michael Fischer, Coldwell Banker’s then CMO emphasizes that real estate is a local business and customers have learned to adjust to the capabilities of smartphones. According to Acharya *et al.* (2010), more and more real estate customers are now using innovative information tools to communicate with real estate agents and search for properties. For this reason, even though the main focus for agents is still the ability to maintain a personal touch with their clients, agents have started to adopt innovative technologies that may enhance communication and effectiveness. The study of Acharya *et al.* (2010) also suggests that the “early adopters of emerging technologies, such as the use of email marketing, tend to perform better than non adopters.”

According to Ipsos OTX MediaCT and Google, 25% of the smartphone users searches for properties (2012).

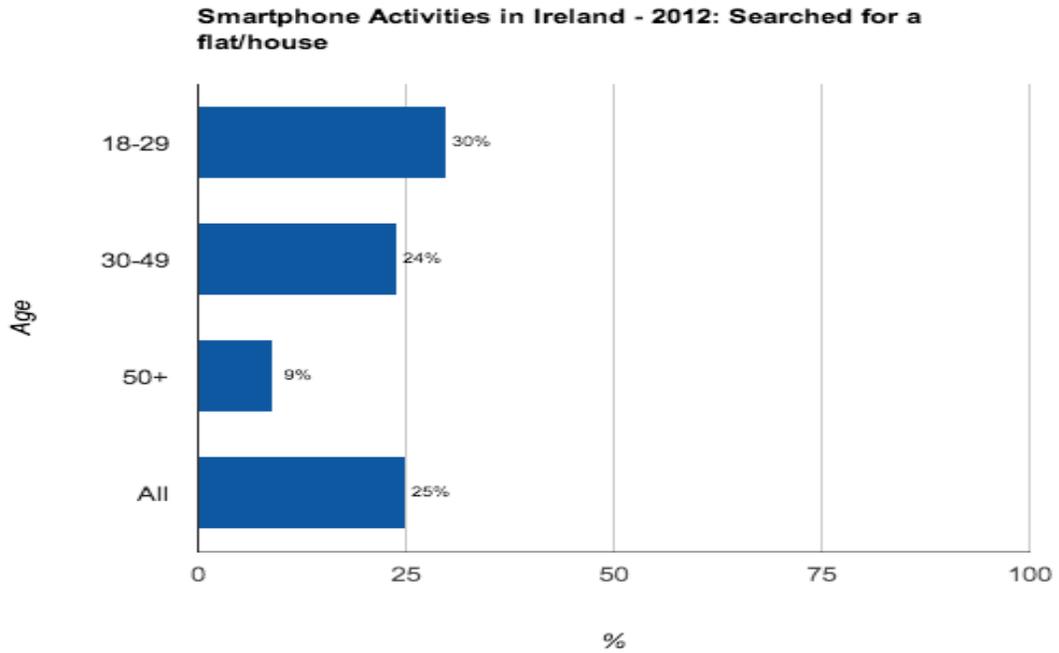


Chart 5 Smartphone Activities in Ireland: Property Search, 2012;
Source: www.thinkwithgoogle.com/mobileplanet

3 Methodology

The research is intended to explore how mobile marketing may impact the overall marketing strategies of residential real estate agencies and property portals in Ireland. The goal of this qualitative research is to fill in the gaps found in the academic literature.

This chapter introduces the research questions as well as the methodology of the research, including research philosophy, research approach, research choice and frame, and the method of data collection and analysis. The ethical considerations and the limitations of this study are also discussed below.

3.1 Research Questions

The study is intended to answer the following research questions:

1. Why do residential real estate agencies and portals implement mobile marketing in Ireland?

The aim of this question is to identify the key factors that has led to the implementation of mobile marketing in the Irish real estate industry.

2. What forms of mobile marketing do residential real estate agencies and portals tend to choose in Ireland?

The purpose of this question is to identify what forms of mobile marketing are used by real estate agencies and portals and why these have been chosen over others.

3. How do residential real estate agencies approach the integration of mobile marketing into their overall marketing communications strategies?

This question is intended to evaluate how the integration of mobile marketing is approached by the agencies and how it may have changed the companies' marketing strategies.

4. How does mobile marketing affect the relationship marketing of residential real estate agencies and portals in Ireland?

The aim of this question is to analyze how residential real estate agencies use mobile marketing to ensure that their relationship marketing goals are met.

Prior to conducting a research, the different research options need to be taken into consideration in order to identify the most suitable research method that will help find the answers to the above questions.

3.2 Research Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to identify the most suitable research philosophy, research approach, research strategy, research choice and the time horizon of the research using the “research onion” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

“Research philosophy is an over-arching term relating to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). It is useful to understand what perceptions and assumptions the researchers may have with regard to the chosen topic and the research methodology, as these may influence the way in which the research is undertaken (Flowers, 2009). According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), “The research philosophy you adopt contains important assumptions about the way in which you view the world”. There are 10 philosophies to choose from (Saunders *et al.*, 2009): positivism, realism, interpretivism, objectivism, subjectivism, pragmatism, functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, and radical structuralist.

This study is subjective and socially constructive. It assumes that mobile marketing is of high importance in the residential real estate industry. However, it is not taken for granted that all agencies have implemented and integrated mobile marketing in the same way;

therefore the research is open to different perspectives while focusing on the reality behind the details. As the author is concerned with how individuals within the industry may perceive the impact of mobile marketing, this study also adopts interpretivism, which allows the author to carry out an in-depth analysis on the topic.

3.2.2 Research Approach

There are two main research approaches: deductive and inductive. The deductive approach allows the researcher to establish a hypothesis by using theory (Saunders *et al.*, 2009) whereas inductive research involves condensing the data by applying categories and themes based on inference and interpretation (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009).

The research approach for this study is mainly inductive, as it is intended to develop a theory from observations after an in-depth investigation of the mobile marketing strategies of three agencies and one property portal in the residential industry. The study also includes some deductive elements as the relevant literature was reviewed prior to the research.

3.2.3 Research Strategy

There are several ways of conducting research (Saunders *et al.*, 2009):

- Action research: brings together theory and practice in the pursuit of finding solutions by allowing the research to work along with participants
- Archival research: extracts evidence from original archival records
- Case study: examines cases for in-depth descriptive analysis
- Ethnology: explores cultural phenomena
- Experimental research: helps establish the existence of a cause-effect relationship
- Grounded theory: generates theory through the analysis of data
- Survey: collects quantitative information

Several research strategies were taken into consideration prior to deciding on the most suitable one. After ruling out most strategies, a decision had to be made between the two best options: surveys or case studies. As there is a gap in the academic literature with regard to digital marketing in the real estate industry, the aim of the research was to get detailed information on the topic, providing the industry with insight into current trends in Ireland. While surveys would have allowed for a larger sample size, the gathered data on its own would not have been suitable for in-depth analysis. Instead, the author believed that interviewing marketing managers and business development managers, and then writing and analyzing case studies would allow for a deeper understanding of the topic. For the above reasons, this research adopts the case study strategy.

“The case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt, 1989). According to Yin (1984), “Case studies can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis.” This research strategy has full potential to get in-depth information and knowledge on the topic. Siggelkow (2007) argues that research based on case data is more likely to provide a much more persuasive argument than a broad empirical research. This study is based on four case studies and a cross-case analysis.

3.2.4 Research Choice

There are two main research options to choose from: qualitative and quantitative. While quantitative research relies mainly on statistical relationships, the qualitative research gives the opportunity to identify patterns, features and themes within a small group. Qualitative research is more suitable for this study as this research type makes it possible to get very specific, detailed, and valuable information. According to Yin (2003), carrying out qualitative research is a good way to obtain a deep understanding of the research problem.

Depending on the research choice, there are three main research methods (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007): monomethod, multi methods, and mixed methods. Monomethod is

based on either one qualitative or quantitative research; multi methods are based on multiple but separate qualitative or quantitative research while mixed methods allow the integration of qualitative and quantitative research. Due to time limitations, this study employs the monomethod analysis, carrying out one qualitative research in a short period of time by analyzing the mobile marketing strategies of four companies in the industry.

The qualitative research is based on four case studies, each put together after semistructured interviews with predetermined questions. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), the main advantage of in-depth interviewing is that it allows the researcher to gather very detailed information about the topic while creating a relaxed atmosphere between the researcher and the interviewee.

3.2.5 Time Horizon

According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), there are two types of horizons: longitudinal and cross-sectional. Kimberly (1980) compares cross-sectional research to still photography and longitudinal research to motion picture photography. Like motion picture photography, longitudinal research presents a “dynamic view of the interrelationships among the components. By watching a motion picture, one can tell how relationships have changed over time and perhaps be in a better position to predict how they will change in the future” (Kimberly, 1980). Cross-sectional research, on the other hand, just like a still photography “enables one to describe and perhaps measure the relationships among the components of the setting at that point in time” (Kimberly, 1980).

This study is based on a cross-sectional research as the purpose of the research is to gather information about the current mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry. Moreover, due to time limitations (with eleven weeks for the completion of the dissertation), conducting a longitudinal research would not be possible in this case.

3.3 Data Collection and Sampling

In order to gather primary data, this study employs qualitative techniques using semistructured interviews, all conducted in the residential real estate industry. “Qualitative data refers to all non-numeric data or data that have not been quantified and can be a product of all research strategies” (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). Apart from primary data, secondary data is also necessary for the analysis, as the review of the relevant literature (academic journals, books, reports) can help identify and understand key concepts with regard to mobile marketing, relationship marketing, marketing strategies and the real estate industry in general.

Research can be used for exploration, explanation and description purposes. According to Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993), exploration helps in becoming familiar with a topic and getting a better understanding of the current situation and this is exactly what this study aims at doing. The research also has an explanatory purpose, as it tries to identify why agencies have felt the need to implement mobile marketing. This study, however, is not for description purposes, as it is not based on hypotheses. The main purpose of the primary research is to answer all research questions and fill gaps in the academic literature.

Before carrying out a research, the sample size needs to be determined. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009), there are two main groups of sampling techniques: probability and nonprobability sampling. Although it would be ideal to interview all agencies and portals in the Irish residential real estate industry, due to time and budget limitations, this study focuses on three agencies and one leading property portal, all chosen with a non-probability-based method, through purposive selection. “The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses” (Tongco, 2007).

Steps Taken to Determine Sample and Collect Data

Due to location and time limitations, participants were chosen based on convenience. Out of hundreds of real estate agencies and several property portals, only Dublin-based

companies with existing mobile presence were considered for the interviews. Information about the companies were gathered from websites and other online resources in order to narrow down the sample size. To get a broad picture on the topic, the author aimed at finding agencies and portals with different backgrounds: in this case, one national company, one international company, one franchise, and one property portal. The goal was to interview marketing managers or business development managers. Potential participants were contacted via LinkedIn with an honest and open approach, demonstrating professional suitability. Out of the ten requests that had been sent out, five companies agreed to participate; however, one had to cancel due to time constraints.

All four face-to-face interviews were semi-structured and predetermined with standardized open and probing questions; however, certain questions were modified during each interview to fit the business structure. The hour-long interview sessions were recorded after receiving written permission from each participant. The recorded discussions were then transcribed and prepared for analysis.

3.4 Data Coding and Analysis

As the analysis is based on a small, nonprobability sample, the findings are not representative (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). There are several methods to analyze data, including conversation analysis, interpretative analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It is a foundational method for qualitative analysis, as it is flexible and useful in providing detailed and rich account of data. The purpose of this study is to identify patterns and interpret different aspects of the research topic in the residential real estate industry; therefore, thematic analysis is believed to be the right approach for analyzing data.

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), there are three main approaches when it comes to qualitative content analysis: directed, conventional, and summative. Directed analysis

uses comparison techniques “in which initial coding starts with a theory or relevant research findings.” Conventional analysis uses open-ended questions for in-depth analysis in case studies, while summative analysis helps view the meaning behind the words by coding the text and interpret its meaning.

Steps Taken to Code and Analyze Data

The data in this study was analyzed by conventional and summative methods and followed the steps suggested by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009). The data was first prepared for analysis by transcribing the recorded interviews and reviewing their content. In order to put together four separate case studies, each text was summarized and organized into different sections, focusing on the four main research questions: reasons for the implementation of mobile marketing, mobile marketing tools and interactions, integrated marketing communications, and relationship marketing. The open-ended questions during the interview ensured that each case study had significant data for each topic.

After the completion of the four case studies, the next step was to identify coding units and themes for the cross-case analysis. All four cases studies were coded and then compared and contrasted to identify concepts and overlaps. The cross-case analysis was completed with special attention to balance description and interpretation.

3.5 Ethics

Ethics is “the appropriateness of your behavior in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of or are affected by your work” (Saunders *et al.* 2009). There are several stances one may adapt: absolutist (universalism), relativistic stance, deception model, holistic stance, pervasive ethical transgression, etc. The author of this study adopts the absolutist stance, protecting participants and their privacy. While the study does not cover any sensitive issues, the ethics checklist is used for ethical guidelines.

Information provided by the agencies and their management has been handled and stored carefully, ensuring the confidentiality of records and the anonymity of the interviewees. The information obtained during the interviews is only used for the dissertation.

Communication with the participants have been open and honest. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the interview prior to the interview session. The interview process was discussed, including the observation method and the recording technique. The interview subjects were also informed about their rights to refuse answering any questions in order to comply with company policies. Prior to the interviews, each participant signed a confidentiality agreement.

The researcher has lived in Ireland for eight years and has been working in a multinational environment; therefore, cultural differences did not cause any difficulties.

3.6 Limitations

According to Merriam (1995), internal validity, reliability, external validity and generalizability are the main concerns when it comes to qualitative researches. “Qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multidimension and ever-changing ... thus; there are interpretations of reality” (Merriam, 1995). Personal biases may affect how reality and gathered information are interpreted, while others question the trustworthiness and reliability of qualitative researches due to other limitations, such as sample size and time frame. The sections below discuss each limiting factor that occurred during the research and the analysis, and its impact on the study.

Limitation 1: Time Frame

This study is part of an MBA dissertation that was required to be completed in 11 weeks. In order to meet the dissertation deadline, the author decided to eliminate the more time-consuming mixed methods and multi methods analysis approaches and instead carried out a mono-method research analysis. The mixed methods approach, however, would

have given more insight, as it would have provided the author with the opportunity to carry out a quantitative research as well. Surveying other residential real estate companies as part of a quantitative research, and then comparing the results of the surveys with the findings of the qualitative research, would have provided the industry with more reliable results and a deeper understanding of the topic. In addition, the multi methods approach would have ensured a more detailed examination of the phenomenon over a longer period of time.

Limitation 2: Sample Size

Out of the hundreds of real estate agencies and several property portals in the Irish residential industry, only three agencies and one property portal were interviewed; therefore, the findings are not representative. While it is believed that this study gives a good understanding of the importance of mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry, due to the small nonprobability sample size chosen in accordance with the author's judgment and convenience, findings cannot be generalized.

Limitation 3 – Personal Bias

Participants for the interviews were chosen based on the author's preferences and judgment. For convenience, only Dublin-based agencies and portals were considered for the research and only those with at least some mobile presence (e.g., a mobile app, a mobile site, or a partnership with leading property portals). In order to get a broad picture of the mobile marketing trends in the industry, the author made sure to interview agencies and portals with different backgrounds and business structures: one national company, one international company, one franchise, and one property portal. Only those companies were asked to participate whose feedback and insight had been perceived valuable by the author based on previous secondary research (company achievements, descriptions, reports, etc.). Other academic journals and industry reports also shaped how the mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry were perceived by the author.

Limitation 4: Author's Background

Being employed by Google as a digital marketing specialist, the author's current work experience and knowledge on mobile marketing may have influenced how the answers of the interview subjects were interpreted during the cross-case analysis. The author is very optimistic about the positive impact of mobile marketing on the performance of businesses; therefore, maintaining objectivity during the analysis was challenging. Furthermore, the author is personally attached to the topic as a close family member works in the U.S. residential real estate industry.

Overall Impact of Limitations

All limitations mentioned in this section may question the validity and reliability of the interpretations. In order to strengthen validity and reliability, the author cross-referenced the primary research findings with multiple secondary sources and cases and aimed at remaining consistent throughout the analysis.

While reliability may seem like a limitation, "qualitative researchers are not seeking to establish 'laws' in which reliability of observation and measurement are essential. Rather, qualitative researchers seek to understand the world from the perspectives of those in it" (Merriam, 1995).

4 Findings

As part of the qualitative research process, the author has studied the mobile marketing trends in four different companies from the Irish residential real estate industry by interviewing one subject per company. Company A, Company B and Company C are real estate agencies, whereas Company D is a property portal.

The aim of this chapter is to summarize the findings based on the four interviews, then analyze the data across case studies in order to identify similarities and differences in relation to the implementation and integration of mobile marketing.

By comparing and contrasting the findings, the author seeks to provide further insight into the mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry. References are not used in this chapter as the findings are based only on primary data.

4.1 Case Study 1

4.1.1 Background of Company A

The company is one of Ireland's largest sellers of residential property in the greater Dublin area, with a national franchise network and over 70 branches nationwide, offering multi-disciplinary property advice and local expertise.

Having their own marketing and IT departments has allowed the company to be innovative in terms of technology, marketing and branding. Focusing highly on digital and mobile marketing, the company managed to be the first nationwide agency to have its own mobile application. With a team of five to six marketing specialists and IT professionals managed by the interview subject, the company is constantly improving its marketing strategy in order to remain among the leaders in the industry.

4.1.2 Profile of the Interview Subject

The interview subject joined the company in 2004, after nine years of working for another leading Irish real estate agency, and is currently a managing partner of a franchise of 58 agents. With strong backgrounds in residential real estate and marketing, the subject is responsible for the overall marketing strategy of the company, providing strategic advice on marketing planning and implementation, sales, and the retail structure.

4.1.3 Reasons Why the Implementation of Mobile Marketing May Have Been Considered in Company A

Mobile marketing was implemented by the company in 2011 with the help of a leading Irish property portal. The purpose was to follow the global marketing trends and make the industry more fashionable and flexible by taking advantage of the explosion of smartphones among the younger generation. While the older generation can be targeted through newspapers and traditional media, the younger target group can only be reached effectively through digital media, including social network sites, mobile applications and YouTube. The aim of the company was to integrate mobile marketing into their marketing strategy in order to achieve competitive advantage.

4.1.4 Mobile Marketing Channels and Interactions Used by Company A

There are several forms of mobile marketing targeting both smartphones and tablets that are currently used by the company. While the company has its own tools and channels, they are also in partnership with a leading property portal, taking advantage of their marketing offerings as well.

Mobile Application (App) – The company has its own mobile app, and the main focus has been to upload all properties onto its back-end and then encourage more visitors to download the application.

Mobile-Optimized Website – The company’s website is currently being optimized for mobile devices. The original website and its content will be simplified, focusing on the most significant functions, such as search or gallery view.

QR Codes – QR codes have been placed on company brochures; however, the interview subject believes that they are overrated in the industry and could be left out of the communication mix without major consequences.

Social Media – A dedicated social media team has recently started managing the company’s presence on Facebook and Twitter. According to the interview subject, Facebook, mobile devices, and apps are all interrelated and very important.

SMS/E-mail – The company has implemented a permission-based system, which is now integrated with the CRM system. Customers have the option to sign up for receiving text messages or e-mails about information relevant to them based on their preferences and search criteria.

Online/Mobile Advertising – While it has not been the main focus, the company is currently discussing online advertising opportunities with a national media company to increase online presence via Google AdWords both on PC and mobile devices.

Partnership with Property Portals – The company is in partnership with the property portal that helped with the development of their mobile application.

Based on the feedback provided by agents and clients, the company’s mobile marketing strategy has been proven successful. While these feedbacks are valuable, the interview subject is planning to implement a system by which they can measure the impact through proper data analysis.

4.1.5 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Communications Strategy of Company A

The company has integrated mobile marketing into its marketing communication strategy with the purpose to facilitate fast and effective communication through mobile devices between the company and its clients. Mobile marketing may not achieve end results, such as placing an offer on a property, but it certainly helps customers reach relevant content in an instant. Even though agencies now focus more on mobile marketing, the industry cannot solely depend on digital media.

Traditional marketing, such as press advertising and the use of boards, is still a significant part of branding and the communication mix. The interview subject pointed out during the interview that boards are still very significant when it comes to building and maintaining brand image; therefore, 15% of the marketing budget is allocated to that. The company spends 60% of its marketing budget on newspaper advertising and allocates the remaining 25% to digital marketing.

4.1.6 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Relationship Marketing Strategy of Company A

Mobile marketing has increased the efficiency of communication between the company and its clients. Buyers and sellers can now be contacted in an instant through various channels, which speeds up the communication process significantly. Apart from accessing property information via the mobile app or mobile site, clients have the option to sign up for emails and text messaging. While clients still have the tendency to call after receiving the information, mobile marketing overall creates a better client experience.

Another important element of the company's relationship marketing strategy is providing dedicated customer support to its clients. The interview subject believes that "buying property is one of the biggest decisions in people's lives." For this reason, clients need

good service, constant attention and a qualified team to assist them along the process. It has become highly important to build the property business through consumer-based content, providing clients with information on market trends.

In order to achieve flawless communication, the company has implemented a CRM system, enabling agents to capture significant information about their prospects and clients. While not all agents use the system yet, the goal of the interview subject is to have at least 80% of the information accessible online in the upcoming months.

4.2 Case Study 2

4.2.1 Background of Company B

As a part of an international real estate company, the company is well-known all over the world and recognized as a leading Irish real estate advisory firm with offices in Dublin and Cork.

The parent company is based in London; therefore some of the main business functions, such as the global marketing department are based in the headquarters. The company's local marketing team of five is in Dublin, where all the local residential and commercial marketing decisions are made based on global marketing guidelines and initiatives. The residential unit represents around 30% of the business, offering consultancy, sales, and marketing advice to its clients for the past 50 years.

4.2.2 Profile of the Interview Subject

The interview subject has been with the company since 1999 and is now in charge of asset management and residential business development, managing a staff of 55, including the marketing team. The division is in charge of selling new and secondhand houses, renting apartments, as well as managing asset, and the sales process is outsourced by the banks.

4.2.3 Reasons Why the Implementation of Mobile Marketing May Have Been Considered in Company B

The company seems to be behind the curves in terms of mobile marketing compared with other leading agencies in Ireland. The interview subject explains this with three internal

limitations: lack of budget for marketing innovation, lack of management focus, and the large size of the business. The company is international with over 500 branches; therefore managing global changes, such as the full implementation of mobile marketing, can be more challenging. Financial and strategic decisions are made in the parent company, and the management seems to have been underestimating the full potential of mobile marketing. The global marketing team initiated the development of a mobile application two years ago; however, it has not been used since. The company is not in partnership with any property portals in Ireland, which makes it even harder to keep up with the trends. A new local marketing manager with an innovative mind-set, however, is starting soon. So the interview subject is hoping for a dramatic improvement in the company's mobile marketing strategy.

4.2.4 Mobile Marketing Channels and Interactions Used by Company B

The company has not fully implemented mobile marketing yet; however, they have taken initiatives and are currently planning full implementation.

Mobile Application (App) – The company has its own app, although it has not been used. The interview subject believes that having an app can help improve brand image; however, the presence on the applications of national property portals are much more beneficial as they are visited by a larger audience.

Mobile-Optimized Website – Providing easily accessible quality content on the website is critical. A lot of effort has been put into updating the company's original website to meet clients' needs; however, it still has not been fully optimized for mobile.

QR Codes – QR codes are only placed in the office windows and are not used on ads or brochures. The company might include them in press advertising in the future; however, the use of QR codes is not considered compulsory.

Social Media – The company has a Twitter page and a LinkedIn page, but it is not currently active on Facebook due to lack of attention and resources. The interview subject

believes that having an optimized LinkedIn profile is more important as it helps the company connect with potential buyers and sellers.

SMS/E-mail – Although the subject believes that texting can be an effective form of communication, it has not been used. E-mail communication, on the other hand, is used on a daily basis for sending out property brochures.

Online/Mobile Advertising – The company has been advertising with banner ads placed on websites of leading newspapers and property portals; however, they have not been using Google AdWords. “We should do search and location based targeting, but we do not at the moment” said the interview subject. Google AdWords will soon be used to target news sites in the aim of reaching the target audience. YouTube is used by the parent company in the UK and will be localized soon.

Partnership with Property Portals – The company is currently not in partnership with any leading property portal; however, this may be reconsidered in the future.

While mobile marketing has not been given proper attention, the company is aware of its importance and is currently working on completing its implementation.

4.2.5 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Communications Strategy of Company B

Integrated marketing communication is of high importance in the company, focusing on promoting a consistent image to create brand trust. Even though 100% of the properties are online, the company mainly uses traditional marketing, spending over 70% of the marketing budget on press advertising, prints, and boards. The rest of the budget goes to digital marketing, community events and sponsorships. “The Irish Times to me is my shop window” said the interview subject. “A big reason we have a lot of the ads in the paper is that we want to impress the sellers.” As explained by the interview subject “It has a due purpose: to create a brand perception and brand awareness of what we are

doing and how big we are.” The presence of boards on properties for sale are also perceived to be more impactful than location-based mobile marketing, for instance.

While traditional marketing is considered essential by the company, they now plan to focus more on digital marketing. The interview subject believes that with the new marketing manager on board, the company will catch up with the mobile marketing trends by integrating mobile marketing into the overall marketing strategy.

4.2.6 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Relationship Marketing Strategy of Company B

The subject believes that it is harder to build trust online: “It becomes more sterile and you are seen more as a brand and not a person.” Technology has helped speed up the interactions with clients but at the same time reduced the number of face-to-face meetings, taking away part of the human element of the business. Despite the disadvantages, digital technology is perceived to be effective in the real estate industry, especially when it comes to building trust in sellers, as they “need to know that you have the best technology in hand for selling their properties” said the interview subject.

In order to manage client information, the company has implemented a CRM system, but it does not seem to be used effectively. Instead, most agents use data websites. As explained by the subject, this system is slightly different from a CRM system, but it serves its purpose and allows agents to upload all the relevant information about a property in a data room, which can later be reached by the buyers or sellers. It provides agents with great insights on who visited the data room and what was looked at, giving an indication of the volume of interest. The interview subject, however, believes that having a management information (MI) would be the most effective approach to improving the company’s relationship marketing, as it would allow agents to provide their clients with valuable information instantly. According to the interview subject, the system would allow agents to provide their clients with instant information about the state of their sale or purchase (e.g., the number of potential buyers, offers, analysis, etc.).

4.3 Case Study 3

4.3.1 Background of Company C

For 10 years, the company operated as a franchise of a leading global estate agency chain; however, because of recession, the company was forced to find a more cost-effective alternative and joined an independently owned national auctioneering real estate group. Changing the brand has been challenging, and as a result of recession, the company had to change the way they used to operate as well. During the boom, 80% of the income came from house sales. Now it is at 20%, so the company has been focusing on lettings, property management and evaluations as well. “We have lost our focus on residential, but this year we are focusing more on that again” said the interview subject, who is hopeful that the market will stabilize in the upcoming years.

The company used to have a marketing team. However, several people were made redundant over the past years; therefore, the marketing function is now managed by the managing director.

4.3.2 Profile of the Interview Subject

The interview subject is the managing partner of the company, with years of experience in the real estate industry. Apart from managing the business, the subject is also in charge of marketing.

4.3.3 Reasons Why the Implementation of Mobile Marketing May Have Been Considered in the Company C

A few years ago, the interview subject noticed an increased demand for online and mobile presence in the industry and has been in partnership with two leading Irish

property portals since to keep up with the trends. Both property portals are equally important for the company, as one of them is believed to be critical for house sales, while the other focuses mainly on rentals. The interview subject assumes, however, that the company is still behind main competitors in terms of having their own mobile marketing strategy. In order to gain competitive advantage, the company is currently working on a better mobile marketing strategy, including the development of a mobile-optimized website and more focus on location-based digital advertising.

4.3.4 Mobile Marketing Channels and Interactions Used by Company C

With the support of the two leading Irish property portals, the company has had significant online and mobile presence. While relying mainly on the two portals, the company also works on improving their own digital marketing strategy.

Mobile Application (App) – Due to financial aspects, neither the real estate group nor the company are planning to develop their own mobile apps. The interview subject believes that as long as all properties appear on the mobile applications of property portals, there is no need for launching a separate app for the company.

Mobile-Optimized Website – The real estate group’s website is optimized for mobile; however, the company’s own website still requires some optimization. “Our own website is not properly optimized yet, but it is in the pipeline. We are in the process of doing that” said the interview subject.

QR Codes – QR codes are not being used as they are not considered important and beneficial.

Social Media – The company has its own Facebook page; however, it does not have a profile on Twitter or LinkedIn. The interview subject assumes that the company is behind others in terms of social marketing; however, current resources do not facilitate further improvement.

SMS/Email – “We couldn’t do texting, not even permission-based. That would be too intensive” said the interview subject. Agents still tend to ring their clients as opposed to using alternative forms of communication. E-mails, on the other hand, might be used for sending follow-ups after the initial phone conversation.

Online/Mobile Advertising – Google AdWords has been used for online advertising on Google’s search network for the past four years, and it has been proven beneficial: “When people come from Google AdWords, we seem to have a much better chance getting the business. We get very good leads.” The interview subject believes, however, that the campaigns will require further optimization in order to maximize return on investment. YouTube is not used for advertising at the moment.

Partnership with Property Portals – The company is in partnership with two leading property portals: one mainly for sales, the other for rentals. The interview subject is convinced that these two portals are critical for their success and predicts that without their support, the company would only get about 10% of the traffic they are getting now.

4.3.5 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Communications Strategy of Company C

The company’s marketing communication is fully integrated and includes mobile marketing, online advertising, boards and flyer distribution. About 85% of the leads and clients come through the websites, mobile sites, and apps of property portals; over 10% would contact the company as a result of boards, flyers, and online ads, and only a few of the leads come from visiting a local office. Mobile marketing has transformed the marketing trends in the industry, and for this reason, it will continue to be prioritized.

The interview subject believes, however, that even though digital marketing has significantly improved and sped up the marketing communication, traditional marketing methods cannot be ignored. The company does not advertise in newspapers, but the placement of boards and the distribution of flyers after a property is sold in the area are

still proven impactful. As explained by the interview subject, “Agents believe that it is necessary to say that we are here, especially when we are looking for properties to sell. It’s more of a brand building exercise.” Promoting the right brand image with the right content by using digital media in combination with traditional media creates brand trust, and that is the aim of the company.

4.3.6 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Relationship Marketing Strategy of Company C

According to the interview subject, mobile marketing has not had a major impact on the way agents communicate with their clients. It has sped up the process and made the information flow more instant; however, phone conversations are still the preferred means of communicating. Clients may initially send an e-mail from their smartphones; however, it is normally followed by a phone conversation, just like before.

The company does not currently have a CRM system. According to the interview subject, their former global real estate group uses a customer relationship management system; however, no such initiative has been taken in the current group. Agents use a paper-based filing system, and it is not in the pipeline to implement a CRM system.

4.4 Case Study 4

4.4.1 Background of Company D

The company is one of Ireland's leading property portals, providing real estate agencies with innovative marketing tools for the past 14 years. Now over 12,000 agents and hundreds of real estate agencies advertise their properties on the portal. With the launch of the platform's mobile application and mobile site, the portal has managed to take in 37% of its traffic from mobile devices, allowing agencies to reach their potential prospects and clients in an instant. Being owned by an Irish newspaper company with multiplatform publications, the company has additional marketing resources to meet clients' needs.

Besides advertising opportunities, the company also provides its clients with customized marketing tools and solutions, including the development of mobile apps, mobile sites and CRM systems. The services and advertising opportunities offered by the company are considered revolutionary in the industry by other interview subjects.

4.4.2 Profile of the Interview Subject

As a digital business development manager, the interview subject is in charge of third-party advertising, focusing on the development of marketing tools and service offerings. With over seven years of experience working at the company, the interview subject understands how important digital marketing has become in the real estate industry and aims at providing agents with the most innovative marketing solutions as well as the best possible online and mobile property searching experience for portal visitors.

4.4.3 Reasons Why Mobile Marketing Has Been Introduced as a Service to Clients

About two years ago, the company started changing its overall strategy and expanded its marketing offerings for the agencies in partnership. As explained by the interview subject, “When the market was particularly bad in terms of residential sales, we took that as an opportunity to re-look at our business and what we were doing.” Since then, the company has been offering the development of websites, mobile sites, mobile applications, as well as customized CRM systems to fit clients’ needs. The subject added, “I think the recession has given us the opportunity to step back and prepare for the return. Eventually, we knew it would need to come back. It had to.” Mobile marketing has had a significant impact on the business, and the company will continue to benefit from it.

4.4.4 Mobile Marketing Channels and Interactions Offered and Used by Company D

The company’s mobile marketing strategy has been proven effective: 18 months ago 12% of the portal’s traffic came from mobile marketing, which has since increased to over 37%.

Mobile Applications (Apps) – Two years ago, the company helped a leading national real estate agency develop their mobile application, the very first mobile app in the Irish real estate industry. Since then, the company has created its own application with a “near me” functionality, which allows visitors to search properties in their areas and now lists all of its clients’ properties. In addition, the company also offers to help with the development of clients’ mobile applications.

Mobile-Optimized Website – The company’s mobile site was designed based on the template of the previously developed mobile application. While it has been functioning well, the site is not fully developed and requires the development of more functions.

QR Codes – QR codes are offered for agents as an option to add on brochures; however, they are not widely popular and only used by certain agencies.

Social Media – The company currently has about 11,000 followers on Facebook and 4,000 on Twitter. While Facebook is more user-focused, Twitter serves as an industry platform, allowing agencies to follow trends and news. The company offers its clients to retweet their information in order to increase their Twitter presence.

SMS/E-mail – The company has a database of 75,000 members who are signed up for newsletters and notifications. These members receive e-mails about properties based on their previous search queries. Text messaging is only used for certain marketing campaigns and not for regular communication.

Online/Mobile Advertising – The company mainly targets Google’s search network as it drives the most traffic with high sales impact. During campaign, the company targets Google Display Network as well. Besides AdWords, the portal is advertised on local websites and classified sites to increase local presence, mainly in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway. YouTube has not been used by the company for advertising, but it is in the pipeline.

4.4.5 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Agencies’ Marketing Communications Strategies

The company primarily uses Google Search Advertising to promote the portal, as this form of advertising has been proven predictable and profitable on all devices. Now over 37% of the portal’s traffic comes from mobile devices; therefore, it is in the best interest of the company and the agencies to integrate mobile marketing into their marketing communications strategy.

As explained by the interview subject, having innovative marketing tools, such as a mobile app, can create trust in buyers, because they need to know that the agency and the portal do everything they can to sell their properties. Traditional channels, however, are just as important as digital marketing. Other main forms of advertising used by the company include radio and newspaper advertising. Appearance in newspapers is still

believed to be important. The interview subject pointed out that “agents want to be seen as big brands, therefore advertise in the paper as well.” On top of the company’s marketing offerings, agencies mainly use newspaper advertising and boards for branding.

4.4.6 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Relationship Marketing Strategy of Company D

Apart from listing clients’ properties on the portal, the company now offers various tools and services to its clients, supporting their day-to-day business and marketing functions. All services and marketing tools provided by the company help sustain a valuable relationship between the company and its clients. Agents are now offered to have their own websites, mobile sites, and mobile applications developed by the company. With an integrated system, agents are able to upload all necessary information onto a backend, through which they can simultaneously update all platforms.

Agencies are also offered a customized CRM system developed by the company. It allows agents to store all the information related to clients (e.g., contact details, preferences) and properties (e.g., brochures, layout, offer letters, etc.). Everything is held in the cloud using Google Apps, which allows agents to access the database from anywhere at any time. The mobile application of Google Apps makes it possible for agents to access the system from their mobile device or tablet.

Having a well-functioning customer relationship management system allows transparency and consistent communication. Both e-mails and text messages are used to contact clients; however, the interview subject believes that initiating phone conversations is still the preferred way of communicating in the industry.

4.5 Cross-Case Analysis

In this section, all four individual case studies are compared and contrasted for accurate analysis. Company A, Company B and Company C mentioned in the cross-case analysis are real estate agencies, whereas Company D is a property portal.

4.5.1 *Trends in the Residential Real Estate Industry*

The economic downturn in Ireland has had a major impact on the residential real estate industry. All four companies confirmed that it took tremendous effort for the residential real estate businesses to survive. While Company B was forced to close down six branches and make 60% of its staff redundant, Company C decided to leave its formal global real estate franchise and joined a more affordable national agency group. The other two companies took the downturn as an opportunity to focus on innovative marketing solutions with special attention to mobile marketing.

All four interview subjects believe that even though the market is not entirely stable yet, the residential real estate industry has definitely started to recover from recession. There has been an increase in demand for properties in the urban areas (e.g., Dublin, Limerick and Cork) and, as a result, an increase in urban residential property prices. The interview subjects for Company C and Company D pointed out that “a property would normally sell within four weeks ... most of the time in the urban areas.” In addition, the interview subject for Company D has noticed the return of international investors, allowing them to believe that the market has finally started to recover. While the change is noticeable in the urban areas, the interview subjects are still concerned about the lack of demand for rural properties.

4.5.2 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Residential Real Estate Industry

According to all four interview subjects, the marketing trends in the industry have changed significantly over the last two years as results of the innovative communication technologies and the younger tech-savvy and mobile-literate generation. According to the interview subject for Company B, digital marketing has made it possible for agents to speed up the turnaround time and deal with a lot more volume. The interview subject for Company C also believes that businesses can no longer rely purely on traditional marketing: in the early 2000s, properties were only advertised in shopwindows, newspapers and on boards; however, due to the mobile-focused marketing services offered by leading Irish property portals, most real estate agents now use digital and mobile marketing. “Mobile marketing has a big impact on the overall marketing strategies of real estate agencies” confirmed the subject.

The interview subject for Company C pointed out that property portals have changed the way agents market properties. Company A and Company C have been in partnership with leading property portals, such as Company D, using all of their digital offerings. Company D was not only among the first ones to introduce a mobile application in the industry; they have also been supporting market-leading real estate agencies by developing customized mobile apps for them on an individual basis. The company has been providing a significant amount of agencies with revolutionary mobile marketing tools and advertising opportunities; therefore, the company’s existence on its own has majorly impacted the industry’s marketing trends.

While it is believed that mobile marketing will become a distinct part of the property business, according to the interview subject for Company A agencies will most likely not walk away from traditional marketing and human interactions. “Nothing is definite in the property industry. Apart from all the technology and marketing, there is always a human element,” said the interview subject, “You can have the best app, the best website, but if you have a bad agent, you won’t get business.” The interview subject for Company B agreed and seemed concerned that digital technology might reduce the number of face-to-face interactions, and as a result, might distance the relationship between agent and client.

As explained by the interview subject, real estate is a people business; this trend could eventually have disadvantages. Human interactions, traditional marketing (e.g., boards), and physical local presence are still considered important in the industry. The interview subject pointed out during the conversation that “local presence matters a lot more than you would think.”

The interview subject for Company A, however, questions the need for local retail shops and believes that it could eventually be possible to manage the real estate business without the presence of local shops. However, in order to achieve that, agencies would need to have a very strong brand and complete online presence. The interview subjects for Company B and Company C, on the other hand, are convinced that retail shops would never disappear completely, even though the number of local shops per agency may decrease over the years. The interview subjects believe that agencies need to back up their digital presence with traditional marketing and retail shops. According to the subject for Company C, “If you do not have an office on the high street, you stop existing as a licensed agent.” As explained by the subject, having local presence maintains brand trust and gives clients a feeling of security.

According to the interview subject for Company D, mobile marketing is now compulsory for branding and overall success; however, traditional marketing, such as the use of boards and newspaper advertising, cannot be left out of the communication mix. While the younger generation of the digital age can be best targeted through mobile and online marketing, the older generation still tends to look for properties in the papers.

4.5.3 Reasons Why the Agencies and the Property Portal May Have Considered the Implementation of Mobile Marketing

Out of the four interview subjects, two believe that their companies (Company A and Company D) are leading the Irish real estate industry trends in terms of mobile marketing. Both companies started the implementation of mobile marketing in 2011 by being the first ones to develop mobile applications in the industry. According to the

interview subject for Company D, the main reason behind the initiative was to prepare the industry for the return from recession. The company believed that as a property portal, they could support agencies by providing them with innovative marketing tools. Company A said that their main reason for implementation was the explosion of smartphones. The company wanted to keep up with the mobile trends and have the ability to target the younger smartphone-savvy generation.

While the above-mentioned companies seem to be leading the mobile marketing trends in the industry, the interview subjects for Company B and Company C believe that their companies seem to fall somewhat behind the current marketing trends, mainly as a result of financial constraints and the lack of initiative. Another factor mentioned by the interview subject for Company B, was the size of the business: the larger the business, the harder it is to implement changes. Although they may seem a little behind the curve, both companies are aware of the importance of mobile marketing, and therefore, intend to improve their mobile marketing strategies in the near future. Company C has been in partnership with two leading property portals in order to grow their online and mobile presence, while Company B has recently hired a marketing manager with an innovative mindset to improve the company’s digital marketing strategy.

4.5.4 Mobile Marketing Channels and Interactions Used by the Agencies and the Property Portal

During each interview session, the author asked the interview subjects about a series of mobile marketing channels and interactions in order to get a complete picture of their current mobile marketing strategies.

Mobile Applications (Apps)

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Mobile Application	Yes	Yes (not used)	No	Yes

Out of the three agencies, only Company A has its own well-functioning mobile application. The mobile application of Company B is currently not used for marketing properties, and Company C only relies on the applications of property portals, including Company D.

All interview subjects believe that due to the increased number of smartphone users and buyers searching on mobile devices, more and more sellers expect their properties to be listed in applications. This, however, does not necessarily mean that everybody needs to develop their own app. According to the agencies, while having their own apps can help develop brand trust among sellers, it is much more important to be listed in the applications of property portals, because they get more traffic from buyers. Out of the three agencies, Company B is the only one not in partnership with property portals; however, the interview subject shared the same opinion as the others: “As a customer, I probably would not be as selective and would most likely use the global provider’s app.”

Mobile-Optimized Website

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Mobile-optimized Website	Being developed	No	No	Yes

Currently, only Company D has its website optimized for mobile devices, and it has only been developed recently based on the existing mobile application. It has a simplified search function and also provides the agents with advertising opportunities (e.g., banners). The “near me” function that is now available in the app will be integrated in the mobile site as well, allowing for better location targeting. As explained by the interview subject, now “Everything from a tablet up will see the full version. Anything from a tablet down will see the mobile page.”

Although their mobile site is not fully functioning yet, Company A has started the optimization process by simplifying the original website, focusing on narrowing down the content and making the site more user-friendly on mobile devices. Company B and Company C, on the other hand, have not started optimizing their websites to suit mobile devices, but both interview subjects confirmed that the optimization was in the pipeline.

QR Codes

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
QR Codes Placed in Shop Windows	Yes	Yes	No	Offered
QR Codes Placed with Newspaper Ads	Yes	No	No	Offered
QR Codes Placed on Brochures	Yes	No	No	N/A

All four interview subjects suggest that QR codes do not play an important role in the industry. “Sometimes the QR codes are there for the sake of having it,” said an interview subject. According to other subjects, they are “not important.” “Agents do not come screaming about QR codes,” and “If I turned it off tomorrow, I do not think agents would complain and ask where it has gone.” While Company D offers its clients to create QR codes for them, the interview subject does not believe they really work, and not just in the real estate industry but in any industry. The interview subject suggested the following: “I think if Apple or Google decided to have an integrated QR code function app within their off-the-shelf production, then maybe. I think the fact that you have to go and download an app, I think it will kill it.”

Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Facebook	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Twitter	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
LinkedIn	No	Yes	No	No

Three companies use Facebook, three are on Twitter, while currently only one company uses LinkedIn to connect with potential clients. The interview subject for Company B believes that having a LinkedIn profile can be beneficial as it allows the company to see the viewers of the profile, providing the agency with potential leads for sellers and buyers. LinkedIn was only mentioned by one other interview subject, who did not see the potential in having a LinkedIn profile.

Company A and Company D invest the most time in managing their Facebook and Twitter accounts. Both companies have dedicated marketing specialists managing the profiles. According to the interview subject for Company D, Facebook is believed to be

more user-focused, while Twitter serves more as an industry platform. While the other two companies are planning to keep up with the trends, Company C is currently lacking the resources for an effective social media campaign, whereas Company B has had other priorities.

SMS/E-mail

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
SMS for Communication	Yes	No	No	No
Email for Communication	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

E-mail is believed to be an effective way of communication, and all four companies use this form of communication on a daily basis. Only Company A uses both e-mails and texting for communication with clients. The company has a permission-based system which is integrated with a CRM system for optimal use. People in the system may receive relevant property information based on their search queries. Company D uses a similar system and e-mail is believed to be a key traffic driver for the portal. E-mails include a link on which customers can click on for further information. Depending on their devices, they are either redirected to the regular website or to the mobile site with an option to download the mobile application.

While the interview subject for Company B believes that texting should be used as a form of communication, it is not considered effective by Company C or Company D. The interview subject for Company D believes that it is a step back as it is much more effective to send well-presented emails with the property details. According to the subject for Company C, texting would be too intensive even if it was permission-based.

Online/Mobile Advertising

	Company A	Company B	Company C	Company D
Google AdWords	Planned	Planned	Yes	Yes
Location-based Targeting	No	Planned	Yes	Yes
YouTube	No	Planned	No	Planned

Based on the answers, most companies have not fully developed their online and mobile advertising strategies yet. While Company C and Company D have advertised on Google's networks for years, the other two companies have only started thinking about this advertising option recently, and the implementation of online advertising campaigns is now in the pipeline for both. Company A has already reached out to a national media company to help with their Google AdWords campaigns, while the interview subject for Company B admitted that the company "should do search- and location-based targeting."

Out of all the companies, Company D seems to have invested the most into their Google AdWords campaigns. The company targets mobile devices with a redirection to its mobile-optimized website with an option to download the application. Both the original and the mobile site are search engine optimized, and as a result, the performance of AdWords ads has increased.

Location-based targeting is considered beneficial by Company C and Company D; however, the interview subject for Company A thinks that it is secondary, as boards serve the purpose of location-based targeting. The interview subject for Company B had the same opinion: "I still believe that boards are critical when it comes to location-based targeting." Company C however, is now planning to focus more on location-based targeting.

YouTube is not used by any of the companies at the moment, but most companies tend to advertise on local websites with banner ads in order to increase local presence.

4.5.5 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Communication Strategies of the Agencies and the Property Portal

According to the interview subject for Company D, most agencies work toward an integrated marketing communications strategy, providing buyers and sellers with easily accessible and consistent quality content throughout all channels. The company's goal is to support its partners in the process by running consistent and well-distributed marketing

campaigns. All other interview subjects also believe that their companies aim at achieving integrated marketing communications.

Mobile marketing has played a significant role in the marketing communication strategies of most companies. Company A and Company C have increased the budget they spend on digital and mobile marketing. Company A spends 25% of its marketing budget on mobile marketing, while Company C allocates 85% of its budget on paying the property portals for digital marketing and Google AdWords for online and mobile advertising. Company B has not been allocating a significant amount to mobile marketing; however, they are prepared to spend more once their new mobile-focused marketing plan is implemented.

While mobile marketing and digital marketing in general have become increasingly important, traditional marketing cannot be ignored. In fact, all interview subjects emphasize the importance of boards, newspaper advertising and other traditional marketing options (e.g., flyer distribution, radio, sponsorship).

Boards

Boards placed on properties are believed to be essential by all four companies. Company A spends 15% of its budget on boards, and the interview subject believes that “you will always have to put boards up on properties.” Interview subjects for Company B and Company C shared this opinion, and both pointed out how important boards were to attract buyers. “The board outside a house is a key element if somebody drives by ... from a branding point of view for a state agent that has their brand on the road and for them a couple of days later have a ‘sold’ sign on it is critical when it comes to impressing sellers”, said the interview subject for Company D. After the property is sold in an area, Company C distributes flyers targeted to potential sellers to increase brand awareness.

Newspaper Advertising, Press

Company C no longer advertises in newspapers; however, all other companies believe that newspaper advertising is still an effective way of marketing properties. In fact, being part of a newspaper organization, the interview subject for Company D can confirm that

the property section has improved and “agents wants to be seen as a big brand, therefore advertise in the paper as well.” Company A allocates 60% of its budget for newspaper advertising, and Company B spends about the same amount on this traditional advertising method, as the interview subject believes that it creates brand perception and awareness.

While traditional marketing options are still considered important and indispensable in the residential real estate industry, all interview subjects are aware that mobile marketing is of key importance these days, especially when it comes to targeting the younger, tech-savvy generation. For this reason, all interview subjects can confirm their dedication toward the integration of mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategies.

4.5.6 The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Relationship Marketing of the Agencies and the Property Portal

The opinion varies on how mobile marketing may impact the relationship marketing of real estate agencies and portals. As a property portal, Company D now offers several digital tools and services that would allow agencies to improve their relationship marketing strategies through mobile marketing. The interview subject for Company D believes that building trust in clients, especially in sellers is key to a successful relationship, and mobile marketing can help in building trust. As explained by the subject, “You may think if a company has a mobile app or a mobile site, they are innovative; they know what they are doing, so I will just go to them. They are going to be more creative down the road than someone with a one-dimensional site.”

In Company A, mobile marketing has increased the efficiency of communication between the agency and its clients. According to the interview subject, the fact that information can be exchanged in an instant has made the experience more convenient. While the main form of communication is still phone conversations, clients now can access mobile apps and mobile sites and have the option to opt in to receiving e-mail and text messages, allowing them to follow any updates immediately.

While the interview subject for Company C believes that communication is now more instant, the subject does not think that mobile marketing has had a significant impact on the ways agents communicate with their clients. Phone conversations are still considered more effective than any other communication methods. As explained by the subject, “Let’s say if you go back to the day when somebody picked up the *Evening Herald*, saw a property, and then they made a phone call to the agents. The same thing happens today, just through mobile marketing. Except with mobile marketing, it is more instant and it is right there. But they do call you directly, just like before.”

The interview subject for Company B is the most concerned about the impact of mobile marketing and digital marketing in general, as the subject believes that it is taking away the most important part of the business: the human element. Company A, however, believes that mobile marketing has the potential to improve relationship marketing as long as it is paired with dedicated customer support.

CRM Systems

In most companies, relationship marketing is supported by a CRM system or similar alternatives. Company D now offers customized CRM systems to its clients in order to simplify their day-to-day business and customer management. Both interview subjects for Company D and Company A agree that having a well-functioning customer relationship management system is critical these days, because unlike prior to recession, agents now have limited resources and are therefore required to do most of the administrative work themselves. According to the interview subject for Company D, CRM systems are easy to use and are a very cost-effective way for agents to run their businesses themselves. Company C, however, no longer uses a CRM system. As part of the global real estate agency, they used to work with one; however, since they joined the national group, CRM systems have been used. Instead, the company uses a paper-based filing system and the interview subject does not believe that this will change anytime, soon: “None of us thought we would need to have this.” The interview subject for Company A, however, believes that “those agents who still use paper-based filing system might be in trouble.” While the subject agrees that it may not be easy to implement a CRM system, it seems worth it to use one.

According to the interview subject for Company A, the challenging aspect of the CRM system is that it needs consistency, and currently, not all agencies use them properly. This is also confirmed by the interview subject for Company B, who believes that they have the exact same issue; therefore, even though they have a CRM system, it is not properly used. Instead, the company uses data websites, allowing them to upload all relevant information about a property in a data room, which later can be accessed by buyers and sellers. Regardless, the interview subject believes that using the company's CRM system would be beneficial. On top of that, the interview subject suggests that MI would be the best solution for relationship and information management in the industry. According to the subject, the system would allow agents to provide their clients with instant and updated information about everything they need to know: the number of potential buyers, offers made, analyses, return on investment in marketing, etc. As explained by the interview subject, "If we get better with the MI, it will give us competitive advantage." Based on the predictions of the interview subject, "the industry will get there in the next two years."

4.5.7 Industry Predictions for the Upcoming Years with Regards to Mobile Marketing in the Residential Real Estate Industry

All four interview subjects believe that mobile marketing will be increasingly important in the industry as a result of the growing generation of smartphone and tech-savvy individuals. The interview subject for Company A said that the young generation aims for information that they can process immediately, and for this reason "you might create virtual shops" in the future. The subject also mentioned that telecommunications could slow things down if they do not improve as fast as digital and mobile technology.

According to the interview subject for Company B, the use of mobile devices and the increased popularity of mobile marketing have changed the industry, and will continue to impact the way residential real estate businesses operate. However, the subject also believes that the importance of mobile marketing has not been acknowledged by most

agencies. While the mobile marketing offerings of one particular property portal have been revolutionary, most agencies, including the case company, have not grasped the opportunity mobile marketing has to offer. The interview subject for Company A agrees and believes that along with Company D and a few other competitors, they will keep leading the industry's marketing trends. The subject suggests that "the rest will need to follow; they will have to."

According to most interview subjects, the feedback on mobile marketing channels and tools used in the industry have been very positive, both by agents and clients. "Very good feedback, I have to say," confirms the interview subject for Company A. According to the interview subject for Company D, "Mobile marketing has made both the agents and the users' lives easier". For this reason, mobile marketing will remain essential in the industry. Most companies are still lacking proper analytical tools to measure exactly how much impact mobile marketing may have on company sales; however, it is in the pipeline for most agencies to implement accurate analytical tools in order to get a full understanding of the impact of mobile marketing. "We will get to measure this better, probably next year," confirms the interview subject for Company A.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

After several years in recession, the Irish residential real estate industry has finally started to recover. Both the primary data collected during this study and the secondary data show that the demand for properties has increased in the urban areas and that most properties are now sold in four weeks. As the supply is constrained and investors show more interest in purchasing, the prices have gone up for the first time since 2006. The rural areas, however, remain in a difficult situation as there is no demand for properties. Nonetheless, businesses overall now seem to be in a better situation, and industry experts have a positive outlook on the Irish residential property market.

As the past years have been difficult in the residential real estate industry, it has been more important than ever for agencies to have effective marketing strategies. Because of the rapid expansion of mobile technologies, many property buyers now use innovative information tools to search for housing, and this has greatly impacted the industry. With the current smartphone penetration rate of 43%, Ireland is expected to become one of Western Europe's top digitally engaged countries. This means that marketing on mobile devices will have to become a critical part of the marketing strategies of most Irish businesses, and real estate agencies and portals are no exception. While some companies have adjusted to the marketing trends and extended their advertising strategies with mobile marketing communications, others are behind with aims of catching up, soon. Although the interviewed companies have varying mobile marketing strategies, all interview subjects see the need for full implementation because of the increased demand for innovative communication tools coming mainly from the younger tech-savvy generation. While both the primary and secondary data justify the importance of mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry, all interview subjects believe that because of the human element of the business, traditional marketing tools and channels cannot be ignored and will remain essential for success.

The aim of the primary research was to find answers to all research questions and fill in the gaps identified during the literature review process. This chapter summarizes the findings for each research question and provides real estate agencies with relevant recommendations.

1. Why do residential real estate agencies and portals implement mobile marketing in Ireland?

This section highlights the main reasons why real estate agencies and portals may want to consider the implementation of mobile marketing. It is also identified why some companies may not have been able to carry out full implementation.

All four interview subjects believe that having an effective mobile marketing strategy is key to gaining competitive advantage for their businesses because of the explosion of smartphone use. However, mobile marketing has not been the main focus for all. Out of the four companies, two seem to be leading the mobile marketing trends in the industry – both of which started the implementation of mobile marketing in 2011. The main reason behind their initiative was to gain competitive advantage during recession and prepare for the return. As smartphone use was increasing significantly in Ireland, both companies wanted to keep up with the mobile marketing trends and focus on targeting the smartphone-savvy generation. The other two companies, on the other hand, have not fully implemented mobile marketing yet, mainly as a result of financial constraints and the lack of initiative coming from management. Although these companies may appear to be behind marketing trends in the industry, both are aware of the importance of mobile marketing, and they both intend to improve their strategies in due course by either developing their own tools or through property portals. All four companies believe that the innovative digital services offered by property portals have been revolutionary and will continue to shape the mobile marketing trends of the Irish real estate industry.

Whether it is through property portals or their own mobile marketing tools or both, residential real estate agencies are advised to integrate mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategies in order to gain competitive advantage in the market.

2. What forms of mobile marketing do residential real estate agencies and portals tend to choose in Ireland?

After analyzing the findings of the research, this question can be answered in detail. The six main forms of mobile marketing used by the interviewed companies are mobile applications, mobile-optimized websites, QR codes, social media tools, SMS and e-mail communications, and online and mobile advertising – all of which are used by each company in varying extent.

Mobile applications are becoming more important in the industry because of the increased number of smartphone users in Ireland, around 25% of whom now search for properties using mobile devices. Understanding the needs of their clients, the interviewed property portal not only has its own mobile application, but also offers to develop customized mobile applications for their clients. According to interviewed agencies, developing one's own application can be useful for branding purposes (for attracting sellers, mainly). However, it is much more effective to list properties on the mobile applications of property portals as they have a much bigger reach. Out of the three agencies, there is currently one company that does not use either of the two options; however, the implementation of both is in the pipeline. Based on the reviewed statistics, around 67% of the smartphone users in Ireland use mobile applications, and the demand keeps increasing. For this reason, it is definitely advisable for real estate agencies to list their properties on mobile applications, especially on property portals' applications. While having one's own application may create brand trust in sellers, listing properties on portals can be a cost-effective alternative.

Mobile-optimized websites have also become increasingly important, as the number of smartphone users is starting to exceed PC users in many countries. Therefore, it is advisable for most companies, including real estate agencies and portals, to have either their original website optimized or a separate version of their site developed for mobile devices, with special attention to format and content. Out of the interviewed companies, only the property portal has a mobile-optimized website; however, all other companies are also planning the optimization by simplifying the original websites and making them more mobile-friendly.

While *QR codes* may also be used by most interviewed companies, none of the interview subjects believe that their role is significant. Some even suggest that they will soon disappear as mobile applications will take over. Both the primary data and some of the secondary data gathered during the research process suggest that the need to complete several technical tasks in order to scan the codes prevents the tool from being effective. However, based on a report published by comScore in 2012, QR code usage doubled among European smartphone users from 2011 to 2012, and now three out of four QR scans result in requests for product information. Whether this tendency could positively affect the real estate industry would require further research. Although QR codes may not appear to be as important as most other mobile marketing tools, there is no harm in using them as the latest smartphones now come with preinstalled QR code-reading capabilities, helping customers with the ease of use.

Social media tools have also become a part of most agencies' marketing strategies. According to the marketing research by Social Media Explorer (2011), nearly nine in ten real estate professionals use social media – including Facebook (79%), Twitter (48%), and LinkedIn (29%) – to sell homes. The interviewed companies can also confirm this as all four use some kind of social media advertising. Three companies use Facebook, three are on Twitter, while only one company currently uses LinkedIn to connect with potential clients. All three social networks offer mobile applications; therefore, users can access their accounts from anywhere at any time. In Ireland, almost 70% of smartphone users access their social network accounts from their mobile devices on a daily basis (Google, 2012), providing real estate agencies with tremendous opportunities to market their properties.

E-mail is believed to be an effective way of communication, and all four companies use this form of communication on a daily basis. The effectiveness of this marketing interaction is also justified by Bluecast Digital (2012), whose survey suggests that 84% of Irish marketers believe that email is a very important component of any marketing strategy. Furthermore, according to Google (2012), 67% of the Irish population access their e-mails through smartphones on a daily basis. For this reason, real estate agents

should definitely integrate e-mail communications into their strategies. *SMS communication*, however, is not considered effective by half of the interviewed companies. Currently, only one company uses texting for communication as a complementary marketing instrument. Most believe that SMS is a step back as emails are more presentable and can include more information. Therefore, the focus should remain on e-mails, while SMS may be used by agencies as a complementary form of communication.

Last but not least, all interviewed companies use some kind of *online and mobile advertising* as part of their marketing strategies. Two companies have been using Google's Search and Display Network. Others, on the other hand, mainly target local websites to create local awareness, although the implementation of Google's AdWords advertising campaigns is in the pipeline as well. Based on relevant academic literature, businesses have been focusing more on expanding their online marketing campaigns beyond the traditional media channels as currently 90% of people move between devices to accomplish a goal (Google, 2012). For this reason, the online advertising campaigns of residential real estate agencies and portals should be opt for mobile devices whenever possible.

3. How do residential real estate agencies approach the integration of mobile marketing into their overall marketing communications strategies?

All interview subjects answered the relevant interview questions in detail; therefore, this research question can be answered accurately by comparing the existing academic literature and the information provided by each company.

As discussed by several academic authors, in order to be successful, businesses need to take into consideration all forms of communication and delivery channels, including mobile devices, when planning their marketing strategies. The mobile device has become a very important channel to reach consumers; therefore, it is now critical to integrate mobile marketing into the overall marketing communications strategy with the aim to complement traditional marketing.

Based on the answers of the interview subjects, all companies aim at achieving integrated marketing communications throughout all delivery channels, including mobile device, as consistent communication creates brand trust and a strong brand image. While mobile marketing has become increasingly important in the industry, traditional marketing channels, such as boards and newspapers, remain indispensable. Boards are still used by all companies, and every interview subject is convinced that this will never change. Three out of the four companies also rely on newspaper advertising. One company, on the other hand, no longer advertises in newspapers as it believes that digital advertising is much more powerful. Overall, the current perception of the role of mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry is that it should be a part of the integrated marketing communications strategy and serve as a complementary marketing instrument to other digital and traditional marketing interactions.

4. How does mobile marketing affect the relationship marketing of residential real estate agencies and portals in Ireland?

One of the aims of this research was to study how mobile marketing may impact the relationship-building process in the real estate industry. While the gathered data is significant, additional research may be required in order to further explore the topic.

The purpose of relationship marketing in any industry is to build, maintain and strengthen long-term relationships between businesses and their clients. A wide variety of customer relationship management (CRM) systems are available for businesses to help them manage customer relations, most of which are now cloud-based and accessible from anywhere at any time. Most interviewed companies, except for one, use CRM systems or similar alternatives in order to support their customer relationship marketing. Some academic journals suggest that mobile devices are the best tools for CRM. In general, based on the answers of the interview subjects, the different forms of communications on mobile devices have increased the efficiency of communication between the agencies and their clients as information can now be exchanged in an instant. Property buyers and sellers have the option to access property information immediately at their convenience through mobile applications and mobile sites and opt in to receiving e-mails and SMS.

Although the new mobile marketing tools and interactions may help with the initial steps of building relationships with clients, most interview subjects believe that because of the human element of the business, phone conversions will remain the main form of communication. The role of retail shops has also been discussed with regard to relationship marketing, and the opinion on their importance varies significantly. While some believe they may disappear completely, others suggest that the local physical presence of agencies is indispensable. Some are actually concerned that digital marketing may take away the human element of the business, while others believe that customer relationship can be improved by providing clients with sufficient customer support.

This research is believed to have been successful as it has led to useful insight into the impact of mobile marketing on the residential real estate industry in Ireland; however, there are endless opportunities for further qualitative and quantitative research as mobile marketing in this context had not been researched in Ireland before.

6 Suggestions for Further Research

The author of this dissertation would like to highlight four topics on which further research may be beneficial; however, the list is not exclusive.

1. Quantitative research on the impact of mobile marketing on the Irish residential real estate industry

While qualitative research has placed an emphasis on getting very detailed information about certain real estate companies and their mobile marketing strategies in order to get a good understanding of the current trends, due to the sample size and time limitations, the findings in this dissertation are not representative. For this reason, they are not suitable to examine a phenomenon in the entire Irish residential real estate industry.

2. On a global scale, where does the Irish real estate industry stand in terms of mobile marketing? (quantitative and qualitative research)

All interview subjects involved in the author's research compared the trends in Ireland with the trends either in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. It would be useful for the industry to understand how important mobile marketing may be in the industry on a global scale. The research could lead to a deeper understanding of the global mobile marketing trends, providing agents with the opportunity to further improve their mobile marketing strategies.

3. Property owner perceptions toward mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry (quantitative research)

and

4. Buyer perceptions toward mobile marketing in the residential real estate industry (quantitative research)

While the qualitative research that has been undertaken as part of this dissertation gives an understanding on what forms of mobile marketing agencies and portals may be perceived as useful, it would be beneficial for agents and property portals to understand

the needs of their clients, whether they are buying or selling. How beneficial do property owners believe mobile marketing is for them when it comes to selling properties? What mobile marketing channels and interactions do they believe are the most useful? Do buyers value mobile applications, e-mail, or SMS communications? How do they feel about the potential disappearance of local retail units? There is a lot to be asked in order to fully understand their needs and preferences.

As the topic is current and the integration of mobile marketing has not fully evolved in the industry yet, the above topics as well as the research of this dissertation should be revisited from time to time in order to track the progress in the industry.

7 Self Reflection on Own Learning and Performance

7.1 Introduction

I am a 28-year-old professional, working for Google as an online media specialist since 2011. I am Hungarian but have lived in Dublin for the past eight years. I attended high school in Hungary and the United States as an exchange student, and earned an honors bachelor of science degree in international business administration while working full-time. This required a great amount of discipline and helped me improve my time management, prioritization and organizational skills. In the meantime, I focused on building my career in different areas and opening my own business.

Setting up and managing my own business was the most significant experience of all. Even though I had to close down the business because of recession, I have been benefiting from all the skills I gained, most of which are transferable to any position. For instance, being in charge of marketing and managing my business helped me improve my project management and communication skills, as well as my ability to generate new ideas, set down a systematic sequence of activities, and carry them through in an effective manner. I also learned how to manage and motivate people effectively and how to make our customers happy by providing excellent customer support. After closing down my business, I worked in retail for another year; however, I was ready for a career change and believed that an MBA degree would help me get there. This is one of the main reasons why I applied for the part-time MBA course in 2011.

7.2 The Impact of the MBA Course

7.2.1 Rationale for Undertaking an MBA

I have always believed that education is important and provides you with more confidence in life. For this reason, I wanted to make sure I had a master's level degree. I chose an MBA over other courses because I had a business background, and I knew that

the degree would provide me with strong transferable skills to further my career in several areas. I chose the marketing stream as the modules seemed very useful for achieving my career goals. The marketing courses have helped me expand my knowledge in integrated marketing communications and strategies. As an online advertising specialist, I used to forget that there were other aspects of marketing, and in many occasions, I ended up concentrating purely on online advertising when optimizing online campaigns for my clients. Thanks to the MBA course, I have started focusing on the big picture and creating for my clients online campaigns that are in line with their overall business and marketing goals.

7.2.2 Self-Reflection in Course-work

Right at the start of the MBA course, I was grouped with four fellow MBA students. We not only functioned well as a team since, but have also become very close friends. I have learned a lot about teamwork during group assignments, and one of the main skills I acquired was how to speed up my decision making.

At the start, it took us a long time to discuss our ideas and views and then reach mutual agreements. For this reason, we were not productive. During the first semester, it took more time than it should have to put our assignment together. We delivered good-quality work but came to realize that we had spent far too much time working on the project because of our slow decision-making process. After identifying the problem, we all sat down and came up with a system to speed up our decision making. We set a time limit for brainstorming, where all five of us had a certain amount of time for reasoning. Then we listed the three best approaches or ideas, including the advantages and the disadvantages. This process allowed us to identify the best solution and come to a conclusion within a reasonable time. Since the implementation of this decision making process, we have managed our time much better and have made faster yet more sensible decisions.

This experience has made the greatest impact on me as a learner. I have gotten better at making well-informed decisions in a shorter period of time, not only with regard to school assignments but also in my professional and personal life. I am currently in charge of a marketing project at work, and this decision-making system has helped me decide how many team members to involve in the project by listing their skill sets and matching these with the list of tasks that are required to be carried out.

7.3 Knowledge and Skills Acquired during the Dissertation Process

7.3.1 Choosing a Dissertation Topic: Secondary Research

I knew from the start that I wanted to conduct a research on mobile marketing as I found the topic very current, and therefore, I believed that I could still identify areas that had not been covered by the academic literature. For convenience, I made a decision to focus on the Irish market; however, at first, I was unsure about the specific topic or industry. A family member of mine who has worked in the U.S. residential real estate industry for 40 years made me think about the potentials of mobile marketing in the industry, and for this reason, I started reviewing resources related to the industry.

For the secondary research, I mainly used the Athens database. I also searched online for any additional resources and reports. Although I reviewed a few books on marketing in general, I mainly read journals and reports on mobile marketing as I believed that they would provide me with the most current information. As expected, I found gaps in the academic literature with regard to mobile marketing in the real estate industry. In fact, I was surprised about the lack of marketing resources available in this context.

I started the secondary research process by drawing a literature map and identifying the main topics related to mobile marketing and the real estate industry. Furthermore, I listed at least 10 keywords for each for a more precise research. Then I categorized the sources accordingly and reviewed the topics one by one, focusing on academic gaps. I identified three out of four research questions through planned research strategies; however, I

discovered a fourth topic, relationship marketing, by chance, so I decided to include that in my dissertation as well. I knew that writing the literature review was not going to be easy, but with my well-constructed filing system and list of keywords, I managed to stay organized and consistent throughout the process. This experience has helped me improve my organizational and analytical skills and made me more productive with my projects at work.

7.3.2 Primary Research Process

Working for Google, I had a good understanding of how important mobile marketing was even prior to the secondary research. I have been helping clients with their digital marketing campaigns on a daily basis, and for this reason, I wanted to study mobile marketing from a business perspective as opposed to a consumer perspective.

I had only carried out quantitative researches before; however, I believed that qualitative research on this particular topic would be more valuable. While conducting qualitative research was outside my comfort zone, I have really enjoyed the process and learned a lot from the experience. I have expanded my research and interview skills and improved my critical thinking skills. On top of that, this experience has made me realize what a great feeling it is to gain expertise in a specific area. I enjoyed meeting clients, exploring the topic, and discussing potential opportunities with them. Further, the experience made me realize that I would enjoy working as a marketing consultant in the future for a specific industry or market.

7.3.3 Dissertation Formulation

I have found both my primary and secondary sources very valuable. The literature review provided me with the opportunity to expand my knowledge and learn about each topic (marketing strategies, mobile marketing, relationship marketing), while the industry reports on current market trends helped me understand the context better. As I carried out

qualitative research on a topic that had not yet been studied in the industry before, I found it important to be detailed about primary findings. For this reason, I allocated around 4,000 words for the relevant literature review and around 8,000 for my findings and cross-case analysis. In order to draw conclusions and provide businesses with recommendations, I compared and contrasted my findings with the relevant literature. I found this process very useful as it has helped me improve my analytical skills.

The outcomes of the research are similar to what I had expected. I believe that my dissertation topic is current and has helped fill in gaps in the academic literature, providing beneficial information for business in the Irish residential real estate industry.

7.3.4 Learning Style

Writing the dissertation and carrying out primary qualitative research have deepened my marketing knowledge and expanded my research and analytical skills. I am now more organized and have a more professional, business-focused approach.

Based on Honey and Mumford's (1986) four learning styles (i.e., activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist), I have been an activist, and this has not changed. I am enthusiastic, impulsive, and open-minded. Moreover, I am excited about new challenges and work hard to make things happen. However, as a result of the MBA course, I have also developed a theorist learning style by improving my analytical and critical thinking skills.

7.4 Career Action Plan

Understanding business is key to many roles I am interested in and the MBA course has provided me with excellent opportunities. I currently work in online advertising; however, I would like to be able to work in more complex marketing roles that may include the planning and implementation of marketing strategies, integrated marketing communications, digital marketing campaigns, and other responsibilities. I have already taken on managing marketing projects in my current position; however, I would like to take my career to the next level. My future career goal is to become a marketing specialist for a specific industry, then a marketing manager and eventually a self-employed marketing consultant. My current career plan is illustrated in the chart below. In order to achieve these goals, I will need to improve my marketing knowledge and skills and gain more experience, especially in consultancy.



7.5 Conclusion

I am truly happy I have undertaken an MBA as it has been a great learning experience. Over the last two years, I have improved several skills. Individual assignments have helped me become a critical thinker and improve my written communication skills. Working in groups has made me a better team player and allowed me to improve my decision-making techniques. However, writing the dissertation was the most useful experience overall. I now understand what it takes to become a specialist in a certain area, and the knowledge I have acquired will definitely help me further my career. I have gained interest in marketing real estate, and the knowledge I have in the field may provide me with additional career options.

I believe that my MBA qualification will open up new opportunities for me within Google or other reputable businesses. I have recently taken on more responsibilities and leadership roles at work, and thanks to the MBA course, I can already see how much I have changed. I am more organized and have a more professional, business-focused approach. In order to make the most out of my MBA, I will need to not only keep improving the above-mentioned skills but also undertake more training in digital marketing, marketing planning, marketing management and consultancy. Furthermore, I will need to make sure I build up a strong professional network both within Google and internationally as I am planning to relocate to another country within the next year. Taking on the MBA course was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Because of this experience, I have gained more confidence in myself, improved several skills, and met some extraordinary people.

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9 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Dissertation Process Plan

Practical Efforts	Start Date	End Date
Decide on Dissertation Field and Topic	January 30, 2013	January 30, 2013
Complete Proposal Outline		January 30, 2013
Gather and Review Secondary Data for Literature Review	February 1, 2013	March 15, 2013
Write Literature Review	February 15, 2013	March 15, 2013
Gather Secondary Data on Research Methodology	March 15, 2013	March 25, 2013
Complete Proposal Outline PPT		March 25, 2013
Write Methodology	March 25, 2013	April 10, 2013
Write Interview Questions	April 10, 2013	April 12, 2013
Complete and Submit Dissertation Proposal		April 14, 2013
Research Residential Real Estate Agencies	April 15, 2013	April 25, 2013
Narrow Down List to Potential Agencies		April 30, 2013
Receive Feedback on Proposal, Contact Supervisor		April 30, 2013
Put Together Interview Package	May 1, 2013	May 12, 2013
Reach out to Agencies and Portals	May 15, 2013	May 20, 2013
Arrange and Prepare for Interviews (4 Interviews)	May 20, 2013	May 30, 2013
Complete Interviews and Follow-up	June 1, 2013	June 20, 2013
Transcribe Interviews	June 1, 2013	June 25, 2013
Consult Dissertation Supervisor for Review		June 25, 2013
Code Data and Complete Analysis	June 25, 2013	July 15, 2013
Revisit, Review and Update Literature Review	July 15, 2013	July 19, 2013
Revisit, Review and Update Methodology Review	July 20, 2013	July 23, 2013
Consult Dissertation Mentor for Review		July 23, 2013
Complete Bibliography and Appendices	July 24, 2013	July 25, 2013
Write Conclusions, Recommendations	July 26, 2013	July 29, 2013
Write Introduction and Abstract	July 29, 2013	July 30, 2013
Write Self-reflection	July 30, 2013	July 31, 2013
Send for Proofreading	August 1, 2013	August 7, 2013
Finalize Dissertation	August 7, 2013	August 10, 2013
Print/Cover Dissertation		August 10, 2013
Submit Dissertation		August 12, 2013
Dissertation Deadline		August 16, 2013

9.2 Appendix 2 – Confidentiality Agreement

Dublin Business School

Company Security Clearance and Confidentiality

(Was not required by companies – signed consent form instead)

Name: Kinga Nemeth V.

Dissertation Title: The Impact of Mobile Marketing on the Marketing Strategies of Residential Real Estate Agencies and Portals in Ireland (Qualitative Research)

Company Security Clearance

Please initial as appropriate

1. We agree that the student(s) may undertake a dissertation of the nature indicated above and that he/she/they will be given access to appropriate information sources within our Organisation
2. We agree that copies of the finished project will be made available for assessment by staff of Dublin Business School, Liverpool John Moores University and External examiners.
3. We request that the completed dissertation be treated as confidential and not used for any other purposes other than assessment

Company Name: _____

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

9.3 Appendix 3 – Consent Form for Research Participants

Kinga Nemeth V. - Dissertation Research Project
MBA in Marketing, Dublin Business School
CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Information Sheet

Purpose of the Study: As part of the requirements for my MBA Degree at DBS, I have to carry out a research study. The purpose of this study is to assess the degree to which the Real Estate Industry is responding to opportunities to promote residential properties through mobile marketing. The study will also focus on how mobile marketing may affect the relationship marketing of the Residential Real Estate Agencies.

What will the study involve? The study will involve a qualitative research focusing on the implementation and integration of mobile marketing in the Residential Real Estate Industry. The researcher will study the marketing strategies of 3 Residential Real Estate Agencies by interviewing the Marketing Managers or the CEOs of the companies. Due to time limitations and the dissertation deadline, one interview will be conducted per agency.

Why have you been asked to take part? You have been asked because the researcher believes that your company is well suited for the research and interviewing you will add value to the study in the field.

Do you have to take part No, participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, please sign the consent form below. You will be provided with a copy of the signed form. You have the option of withdrawing before the study commences, even if you have agreed to participate, or discontinue after data collection has started. You may request to withdraw the data within two weeks after the interview.

Will your participation in the study be kept confidential? Yes, I will ensure that no clues to your identity appear in the dissertation. Any extracts from what you say quoted in the dissertation will be entirely anonymous.

What will happen to the information, which you give? The data will be kept confidential for the duration of the study. On completion of the dissertation, they will be retained for a further six months and then destroyed.

What will happen to the results? The results will be presented in the dissertation. My supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner will see them. Future students on the course may read the thesis. The study may be published in a research journal.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part? I do not envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. It is possible that talking about your experience in this way may cause some distress.

What if there is a problem? At the end of the interview, I will discuss with you how you found the experience and how you are feeling about the provided information.

Any further queries? If you need any further information, you can contact me on 085/1212981 or via email at nvkinga@gmail.com

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

Consent Form

I.....agree to participate in Kinga Nemeth V.'s research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Kinga Nemeth V. to be tape-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please choose one:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed.....

Date.....

9.4 Appendix 4 - Interview Questions

Introduction

1. Can you please tell me about your background and responsibilities in the company?
 - 1.1. How long have you been working for this company?
 - 1.2. What is your position?
 - 1.3. What are your main responsibilities?
2. Can you please tell me about your marketing department?
 - 2.1. Do you have a marketing department?
 - 2.2. How is your marketing department structured and what are the different marketing areas the department is divided into?
 - 2.3. Who is in charge of marketing decisions? Are decisions made centrally or locally? (Depending on business structure).
 - 2.4. Do you have a person/team in charge of digital marketing?
 - 2.5. Do you have a person/team in charge of mobile marketing?

Why do real estate agencies and portals implement mobile marketing in Ireland?

1. What year did you start the implementation of mobile marketing?
2. Why did you decide to implement mobile marketing?
3. Compared to your competitors, how quickly do you think your agency responded to mobile marketing opportunities?

What are the mobile marketing trends in the residential real estate industry?

1. How important do you think the use of mobile marketing is in the industry?
2. How do you see the future of mobile marketing in the industry?
3. How do you see mobile marketing progressing further within the industry and within your own company?

4. How do you feel about the current climate? Is it harder to get buyers these days?

What forms of mobile marketing do real estate agencies tend to choose in Ireland?

1. Do you have a mobile application? What functions are available? Purpose?
2. Do you have a mobile website? Is your site optimized for mobile devices?
3. How are your mobile application, your mobile site and your original site different?
4. Are you using social media (e.g. Facebook)? What is your strategy and purpose?
5. Are you advertising online (paid advertising)?
 - 5.1. Are your advertising campaigns opted into the mobile platform?
 - 5.2. Are you using Search/Display ? (e.g. Google)
 - 5.3. Are you using location targeting?
 - 5.4. Are you using video advertising on YouTube?
6. Are you using QR codes? Where do you place the QR codes?
7. Are you using SMS/MMS service to contact your potential buyers? Is it a permission-based system? How does it work?
8. Is there any other forms of mobile marketing you are using?
9. Compared to your competitors, do you believe you are making the most out of mobile technology?
10. How effective do you believe your mobile marketing strategy is?

How do real estate agencies and portals approach the integration of mobile marketing into their overall marketing strategies?

1. Are you marketing communications integrated? Do you believe IMC is important?
2. Apart from mobile marketing, what other channels are you using for marketing properties?
 - 2.1. How would you rank them based on importance or priorities?
 - 2.2. How would you rank them based on impact?
 - 2.3. Do you believe retail shops and branches will remain important?

3. How do you insure that all the channels and platforms are integrated?
4. What is the main purpose of mobile marketing? Is it fully integrated into multi-channel marketing?
5. What percent of your marketing budget do you allocate to mobile marketing?
6. Overall, how has mobile marketing impacted your overall marketing strategy?

How does mobile marketing affect the relationship marketing of the residential real estate agencies and portals in Ireland?

1. Buying a house can be a long process. How do you keep your customers happy along the way from a relationship marketing perspective?
2. What is your main focus of relationship marketing?
3. Do you have a CRM system? What are its main features?
 - 3.1. How do you target customers that are in your CRM system?
4. How do you believe mobile marketing affects your relationship marketing strategy?
5. Do you believe your mobile marketing campaigns are successful?
 - 5.1. How do you believe customers perceive mobile marketing?
 - 5.2. What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign?
 - 5.3. How do you measure the impact of mobile marketing with regards to relationship marketing?

What is your plan for the future with regards to mobile marketing? What steps are you taking to insure competitive advantage?

9.5 Appendix 5 - Interview Transcripts

Please note that all interview transcripts have been modified to disclose confidential information and ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the interview subjects and their companies.

Interview Transcript 1 – Company A

Can you please tell me a little bit about your main responsibilities?

Sure. My background is marketing. I would have worked in 'company x' and Company A before I joined the current company in 2004. I manage a franchise that's about 58 agents in the country. I am responsible for the overall marketing strategy, including press, boards, local marketing of the branches, shop fronts and CRM systems, as well as multi-media. I am also in charge of providing strategic advice and real estate and sales performance. Along with the managing partner, I insure that our IT structure is going forward. I am also responsible for the retail structure as each of our agents who join will have to have a shop. That's where it is at the moment, so these are the things I am responsible for. It is a busy job. I am responsible for keeping up with the trends. I find mobile and apps very interesting progressions.

You mention on your website that you have your own marketing and IT departments. How is your marketing department structured and what are the different marketing areas the department is divided onto? Do you have a person/team in charge of digital and mobile marketing? Did you hire somebody specializing in mobile marketing or you trained your own staff?

Our marketing team consists of 3 marketing specialists and 2.5 IT professionals. *Is there anyone in particular in charge of mobile or digital marketing or they all work together?* We all work together and take overall responsibility for the whole IT, mobile, marketing application, and press for the company. I am not a boss, really. I don't work that way. I manage people through discussion, through opinions and I am not afraid to say when I'm wrong. I am not a guy who gives orders and expects them to be carried out. I am very clear on what line management does. I am always there to help. As a manager, you support the people you pay. You make certain decisions along the way and if the decision was not the right one, you have a

discussion in the team and we will try to filter in. They need to own their decision. If you don't own your decision, you are going nowhere. So, in terms of managing, it is a group of 5-6 people. It's not perfect, I wouldn't be right all the time, but it's heading forward into what they say is in charge of your own territory. We are constantly improving and moving forward.

I notice from the American model that there is nothing really new here with regards to the segmentation model and structure. They are breaking it out into social work, aspiration life potential. It's very clever, but it's still the same model where we were 25 years ago, except you have a younger generation. They don't talk to me, they text me; even my children. I live in the same house with them, but I have more texts in my phone than I could count. My children are totally mobile and laptop literate, totally Facebook literate. I see the future different – well, I am 56 and may not be around to see all of it – that very interesting concepts going forward: very bright people doing very bright things with apps, with mobiles. But you still have to pay for it and attract an audience. You won't walk away from mainline regular media and I am not sure that Twitter is the answer to it. For instance, LinkedIn is a very active business communication tool. With regards to Facebook, I think there's something and what everybody is missing. I think once Facebook starts to charge, they will charge. You will become a regular user, or have a premium account. And once this system is introduced, similar to the one on LinkedIn, it will be interesting to see how Facebook will deal with those challenges. Facebook, mobile and apps are all intra-related and very important. *Yes, in Google, we focus very much on mobile marketing as well and put a lot of effort into improving.* Yes, it is very good and I can see it being measured. Could I see things like no shops for agents? I could. It'd have to be a very strong brand, spending an awful lot of money. In Ireland it's 30% mobile usage this year in terms of iPhones, Blackberries,

Smartphones. I think they picture 47%. It was very interesting to see that the tablet searched jumped by 10-12%. Once you jump 10-12% or more, it has a big impact. I'm interested to see what will happen with tablets. Coming back to it, I don't think anybody is going to run off like Starbucks and just going to be dependent on the mobile side for their business. I think it's the same with large retailers, such as M&S. They will develop apps and online platform. I think they might look into Amazon and huge warehouses where they have the logistics. But I still think they need branding. Overall, I think it will change the world if everything travels in a straight line. There are vulnerabilities around, like the whole telecommunication center like broadband, or network and 3G and 4G. Telecommunication technology could slow things down if they don't improve as fast as digital and mobile marketing.

What year did you start implementing mobile marketing?

It was really about a year and half ago, sorry about two years ago. We have a partnership with 'portal a'. It wouldn't be too hard to understand that, really. I worked in Company A, I worked in 'portal a' for a period of time. I wasn't in 'portal a' but would have worked along the people who started 'portal a'. I would have a very good relationship with 'portal z'. They sit within the 'company zz', which for our company pages is still our bread and butter. About two years ago, we decided to look at our industry and make it more fashionable and flexible. We developed a system with 'portal a' for agents and have certain add-ons to it. Now 'portal a' sells that as a CRM for agents. 'portal a' sells their own app as well. So we set that up, with one eye on the efficiency and the other on the future. Then the app came along. It hasn't really begun to kick, yet, because I think it takes some time to integrate everything. We have an awful lot of properties that are not in our system and it takes a while to move all our backend onto 'portal a'. That will happen within the next two months. When that happens, we will have

full accessibility. Even though Cork, Dublin and Galway are the main areas for the company, so people would gravitate around that. Then, we will look at marketing strategies around driving people onto the app. I think that will be important.

Why did you decide to implement mobile marketing? What actions did you take prior to implementing mobile marketing?

I suppose, another person and I saw the explosion in iPhones and the explosion in younger people, and how you are going to get to them. You are not going to get to them in my opinion...I have to be careful here...The 18 to 16 – 24. This group of people; you will not get to them through newspaper. You will not get to them...You will get to them through TV, but it won't be TV turning on a television set, it will be web based TV, e.g. YouTube, and all that...So as I am 57, I may not be around to see it, but I think mobile marketing will become an instinct part of property. *Okay. Do you see this in the industry as well overall, or do you are more advanced....* I think we are always ahead. I think Company A and us are ahead. I think the rest will follow, I think they'll have to. And your problem is...you have to have and I suppose it's the same if you are a media company or let's say we are using a company for creative design. They don't have an app at the moment, but they will have an app. What you can put on an app is limited, because they have 6 to 10 really good clients. We have over 8000 properties; Company A would have the same. We'll probably have by the next 2-3 years that'll probably multiply, so we are having volumes. This added volume could be a challenge. You'll have added volume, but you also have to be careful of the content and how you are going to lead people to the app. And it's interesting in the States, I see the old tricks coming out, it's the same game as it was 10 years ago. In the States, you see weather tips, house tips, gardening tips, etc. Nothing has changes. I don't think, I think the way to actually do this is to build property through consumer based content. And that's quite difficult. It isn't just your garden or your house; it is more to be an adviser on what will happen in the market place in the next three or four years. I see it more as a step forward, but it's quite difficult to do, Kinga. It's quite difficult to do. You are out there selling properties, and funny enough, no matter what people say, most agents are all three months behind. You should Google this and see when agencies talk about the market and the sales of properties. They have a solid knowledge of their own business, but the things that are going on behind all this is a different thing.

I saw that you have a website optimized to mobile phone. How is it different from your original website and what factors did you take into consideration when deciding on the content and the layout?

Well I suppose... clever guy...you are one step ahead. The first part was creating the app, the second part is redesigning the website, so what I have to do is we have to strip our website down, take out what we consider to be important and we are going to cut this now to its origin. We are looking at a smaller screen, and need to look at what customers are looking for on mobile: there is need for searches, price ranges, etc. We have started the process of stripping back our website. I have a company looking at the front end for us at the moment. We may also change the look of our app as well. We just need to think that through. There is an argument that it should be different from our mobile site, because you are looking at a younger audience. I don't know how it is in America.

How is your mobile app different from your mobile site? What is its main purpose and what functions are available?

Our CRM enables us to capture enough information. We are probably not solely there, yet. We are probably going to try and build...yeah....okay...don't quote me on this...(..) Now, you work in Google and I am sure you have an awful lot of phone-based people who are very highly trained selling Google products or supporting Google products. In the property business, we need to be very careful about what we do when someone comes into our app, and will need to try and capture information. Whether, we can get an email from them through the app after they download it to there phone is the question. They may want to see one thing or another, but the interesting argument against there or for it is that they most likely will ring anyway. People always feel they have to ring in Ireland. I don't know what it's like in America. I see that we the highest rate of mobile phones in Western Europe. We are in the first 15 countries in the world for mobile ownership; which means we talk a lot. It's no secret that O2 and Vodafone make an awful lot of money of Irish people talking and texting. So, is that one bit that's missing in this is that can we talk to encounters in a way that it is balanced and measured? That gets those houses; because that's the business we are in. To impress people with our brand, because there is an awful lot of business out there to receivers, accountancy groups and banks and it needs to meet the needs of the person who goes on the app. We haven't quite worked that out, yet.

Are you advertising online (paid advertising)? Are you using Search/Display (e.g. Google)? Are you using video advertising on YouTube? Impact? Are your advertising campaigns opted into the mobile platform? Are you using location targeting?

We don't use location-based advertising, yet. You've got to remember something. When you look at big businesses in Ireland. You'll probably see Company A, ourselves, that's because we have boards. So we still focus on boards. You have to look at various sizes of board. We will do outdoor media in Dublin. It is all about people looking up. Now I'll have to find a way to get the message onto those. Technically, now you are regulated. You need to have license numbers on the boards, phone numbers, what you want to do and how. This is a driver. You have a thousand pieces of merchandizing on main roads. Boards are still huge. Funnily enough... We are in the middle of it...we have a social media team. I am dealing with the summit, another person and myself. We also have a young team, guys and girls. Girls are just excited to get involved in this. We are talking to – can't give you there name –we are talking to a company in Ireland. It's a national media company. We have discussions with them on Google AdWords and about our approach in Twitter. We are up on Twitter; we are up on Facebook. Not sure we are fully functional there yet. You've got to realize this business has grown so much. When I came into the company in 2004, all they had was a Dublin branch network. They had 12 branches, now we have over 77. So it's a huge change. And the market has changed. People are selling fewer properties. We are dealing with bigger entities and volumes. There are more people coming in. So, it's work in hand. I'll have a proposal from them in the next 2 weeks. I'd imagine, probably in September and October we'll start to implement that if the cost is right. I do believe this is a professional gang and all that sort of stuff. I absolutely believe. Does blogging work? An awful lot of people are doing it now. I'd like to know who are reading them. I think this will come down to Barack Obama wrote a peace of the US childcare system. I think people will read that. Or, if another writer, such as Robert Fisk, he is incredible guy. He is not everybody's cup of tea, but I worked in Israel for 3 years and what he says is true. However, I think there are too many people writing and starting blogs, and I'm not sure about that. At the end of the day, there is only so much you can do with a tablet or a kindle reading a book. Eventually your eyes get tired. There are too many of these people out there and they are writing as they would write in the

newspaper. If you for instance take the 'company zz' Times...you may take a peace or another, but all of it is just too much. Having said that, I'd like to hope the posts works, and that's a contradiction.

Are you using SMS/MMS service to contact your potential buyers? Is it a permission-based system? How does it work?

Yes. It is a permission-based system. Anything that comes in, we reply to it via SMS. We have that in place. Again, do we use it well? We don't use it as well as we could, and that's where again (...confidential). Their mandate will be to take it. They'll be able to roll that out as they are driven from a different. Agents are a bit different. They love prospects and they work for commission, so they have a different perspective when it comes to doing business. They want to get a new deal, a new house, and exposure. I think you need a service team to take care of the customers. They are driven from a different dynamic. Customers need more than just the option to buy a property. (...) You have to be careful how you interact with your customer, more so than ever. You can record mobile conversations; you can take photographs, you can do everything in an instant. Everything is instant, so you have to respect the customer and how you are going to communicate, because if you don't do that, you are risking losing them. Businesses should protect their customers in a profitable manner. If that sounds right. You should see that protection as being part of your service and you should be able to manage that within your own company. If you have someone knocking on the door telling you that you are not managing and treating your customers right, your business is going to suffer anyway.

So how does texting work, exactly? You can join the system after searching property. Based on your search criteria you may get a text message or an email when a new property becomes available. E.g. you can state where you want to live, what you want, for how much and then when a property becomes available in the area, let's say in Ballsbridge, then we send you a text message saying the details quickly.

Are you using QR codes? Where do you place the QR codes?

Yes, we do have QR codes. We place them on our brochures; we put them in our ads. I think these codes however are going to be overtaken. Having talked to people in the media side, of what we were

doing. They have the opinion that QR codes are going to be sort of like redundant in the next 9 months. It's an interesting ...I'm not sure it's fully thought out as a concept. I know what they were trying to do with it and it sometimes works very effectively. I have a QR code reader on my phone. A laser reader. As I am getting older, I need to train three times a week to keep it all together, but I have things like training things. Where you can scan and hold a piece and look at it when you are training and the technique on that is interesting. But sometimes the QR codes are there for the sake of having it. I've seen it in some cases. *I tend to see them on real estate retail shops, in the window.* Yes, that's right. Retail shops do use them. Except, I think this is just a part of marketing the property. I don't think most people will use the QR code. I believe they would rather go on the app or the website. . It's more comfortable. It's more you are trying to create a one-to-one. And people are looking for that. I think QR codes came between the app and the websites. I know we have thousands of them in 'portal a', but I'm not sure... My agents do not come screaming about QR codes, they come screaming about the app, or the website. They are screaming about where the customer's house is. I wonder what it's like in other real estates.

How do you believe customers perceive mobile marketing?

Very good feedback, I have to say. On the app and the texts, you see it. Every week you can hear agents talking about that. Our guys down the country for instance are screaming at me why their properties are not on the app, yet. It's another two months before we get the backend right. We will also go change the website. We have 60-65% of our properties up and we need to improve that. Agents don't complain about other things. They complain when they are not on the app or the website. It's a good sign that the app is working and they want to be on it. It's great that they complain about it. If they didn't; then you would know it's not working. The worst thing is when you don't hear any feedback. It means that it is not important. It's the perfect test and it is very true.

What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign?

You need to position it as a speed thing and as an access to the market. A quicker solution to what people used to wait weeks for. There is a particular property culture in this country. People go to viewing houses with no interest in buying or selling houses. They like to see the insides of houses. It's a culture in particularly and Ireland and England and

it isn't in the States, I don't think so. I think here people are more functional about the house they want to buy. So, contents are a part of this, also acceptance. It is also important to have credit as a company. It's not any different of any other type of business. Your message; the creativity of your message. For instance, we are the number of one app in Ireland. They can't disprove is. Or let's say we are stating that we are the number of brand in Dublin. Nobody is going to say we aren't. Someone else may say they are number one. Does that mean you are number two? No, it means that they are number what at something and we are number one at something and that's great. PR companies have come to us and say, are you really the number one? We said, for instance with our app, we are number one. I've always believed in that.

Buying a house can be a long process. How do you keep your customers engaged along the way from a relationship marketing perspective? How has mobile marketing changed your interaction methods with customers?

It hasn't changed much. What I see in terms of(long pause)...you can segment the market the same way as before. You will have the people who know exactly what they want and wait for it. You also have those who don't know what they want, and then there is a 3th and 4th group: they don't have the money, but they pretend. Around the 13th phone call, you are looking at your scripts and realize that it's a waste of time. And there are people, in this country anyway, and in the UK as well (worked there for 2 years), you have to be careful with as buying this property really-really-really matters to them. This property is one of the biggest decisions of their lives, they are not moving around. The first group, they'd move, they change. They plait the bloody thing, then they sell it and move on. While other ones know what type of house they want, they can't afford it, so wait. And then there is the third are the ones you really have to hold hands with. Agents do that. (...confidential information...) It could be viewed as a hybrid, but it isn't, really. I can't say an awful lot more. However, I can say that I have the people for it and will start, soon. That's all I can say.

I know business since 1995. I know really good agents who repeat business in families. And that's because they did that very well. There are few of them left, but the ones I have are excellent and they'd be the ones I would send my family to, because I know they won't let you down. It's about service; it's about experience. Buying property is one of the biggest

decisions in people's lives and you have to keep that in mind.

Do you have a CRM system? What are the features? What do you use your CRM system for? How do you integrate that with mobile marketing?

We are putting the entire backend on 'portal a'. The reasons for that is one, they are better than us, two is that they are part of the 'company zz' group. And this is coming up in the near future. It's a bit like having a small army, but you are not sure if you are going to fight anybody. In order to make the most out of your CRM system you need to educate your agents; you need regulations and compliance. You need to make sure information is entered properly in the system on a regular basis. You can have everything on the system, client information, letters, communication, commission information, etc. Those agents who still use paper-based filing system might be in trouble. We built our own CRM system with 'portal a'. 'portal a' had the prototype, but we added things to it. We had workshops with our agents for 6 months. We now have over 60% of the information on this, and another 20 will go, soon. You'll always have 20% of the people (especially in the franchise) who won't do anything. There is so much you can do. They'll be the last to do this. At the end, however, the force of your company will bring them in, because there are marketing applications around digital images. We still need to look at that in terms of going forward. It's interesting how you advertise on mobile – and there are still a few questions about that. It's a different, smaller screen, so are you doing a lot of teaser-based stuff, rather than actually put the end result there, or you drive them somewhere else...so it's hard to decide.

How do you measure the impact of mobile marketing with regards to relationship marketing?

Agents' feedback. We have people writing to us. I get phone calls. I get mails on our app. For instance, just the other

day I got an email saying that 'it's a lovely app, but why is my property not on it?' We will get to measure this better, probably next year when our new website is created. In terms of advertising, we are also going to code all our ads. We do that at the moment, it's however not the way I would want it to be. It's just not perfect, yet. We measure at the moment by word of mouth, clients' feedback and by the actually increased number of properties. Nothing is definite in the property industry. Apart from all the technology and marketing, there is always a human element. You can have the best app, the best website, but if you have a bad agent, you won't get business.

How do you feel about the current climate? Is it harder to get buyers these days? Has mobile marketing helped you with keeping buyers and improve sales?

Certainly, if you read the headlines, it appears to be better. I think in Dublin, Cork and Limerick, you can definitely see an improvement. The rest of the country is marginal. Longford, for example is very different from Limerick. I think if you have volume and people, you see property prices improving and come back. Unfortunately, the tail-end of it is a bit different. E.g. a small town with no infrastructure will still take a lot of time to come back. But do I see it come back? Yes, I do. It's coming back in Dublin, but it's very dependent on landing and people and confident and jobs. There are an awful lot of young people 24-28 now who have left the country.

What percent of your marketing budget do you allocate to mobile marketing?

60% press, 25% on mobile and websites, 15% on boards and other media. The problem with going outdoor is that you only get it for 2 or 3 weeks. You want to have a good message and money. You get your boards. We changed the boards 3 years ago, we rebranded to our current name. Had a longer name before. We may do that again. This is an ideal country in terms of board focus. I know that in America, you have a flood load of

roads. In Ireland the demographics are better, plus you have the perfect background, because you have green fields. In the States, you want the boards in the parking lots; here, you want them on the green land. It lifts the boards and they become very visible.

Overall, how has mobile marketing impacted your overall marketing strategy?

I believe you will always have to put boards up on properties. I believe you will always have to have people to sell good houses. You, however, might not need shops to do that. Ten years ago, for instance, we were looking into getting laptops. People are on the road and creating...our aim is to create a marketing campaign personalizing the app. If you are a strong brand, you can come in with your mobile, you can have audio, you can click on an agent and hear their introduction. Eventually, you might create virtual shops and put the board on the houses. Most people however believe, even my colleagues, that there will always be shops. I believe the younger generation (24-34 year olds), who are very IT literate, very smart people, very educated; they will aim for information that they can process immediately, helping their purchasing decisions. I think we may not need to go to shops. Think of Amazon or iTunes, you can get everything there now. But then look at HMV...if they can fall, a brand so strong that you would put your money on it, and then look what happened. Online and mobile marketing are changing things around, but it is dependent on network, services providers, etc. I predict, you will have fewer shops; you will have virtual networks. It's a pretty scary thing. You could save on shops and spend that money on marketing, because that's the key. We are using tablets when meeting clients – everybody has smartphones and tablets. I think that's the future. And I think Google is centered in that future. They also have a significant responsibility and I am not sure they quite understand that, yet.

Interview Transcript 2 – Company B

Can you please tell me a little bit about your main responsibilities?

I joined Company B in 1999. I'm in charge of our residential and our asset management business. I manage a staff of 55. We have branches in Cork, Dublin and Belfast and basically we are residential businesses of second hand residential, we also have a new homes business, selling houses that are newly constructed. We also have lease residential business, management business and apartment rentals. We also have a residential asset management and receivership. A lot of the banks are disposing assets at the moment. They outsource the service of managing that process. Take those assets over, deal with the borrower, deal with the tenants, collect the rent, put the insurance in place, and to dispose to those assets. It's not to say that Company B will sell them, we just manage the sales process. I may get another agent to sell if it's in an area where I don't have a branch. That's a big part of our business as well over the last two years. The residential unit of Company B represents probably 30% of Company B PLC in Ireland.

How is your marketing department structured and what are the different marketing areas the department is divided onto? Do you have a person/team in charge of digital and mobile marketing? Did you hire somebody specializing in mobile marketing or you trained your own staff?

Our marketing department is made up of two structures. 1. We have a marketing team in Dublin. Within the team we have a staff of 5, and they are responsible for both the residential and the commercial business. I have an overall head of marketing. She is basically in charge of strategy. Within the team I have people who are dedicated to the marketing function of the residential market. About 1.5 staff is in charge of residential. 2. I also have a global marketing team in London, where I have to adhere to those global marketing guidelines: branding, how we market the brand, how the brand looks, boards, etc. The website is centrally managed from London, although we input some of it here. There are also global marketing initiatives for certain clients. So we have a dedicated team in Dublin for the day-to-day local marketing; and then the strategic global marketing is managed in London. We train our own staff for anything new. We deal with changes internally. We might

bring in a consultant, though, for a period and we have done that a lot over the years.

With regards to mobile marketing, where do you believe you stand compared to others in the industry?

In Dublin, we are behind the curve. Couple of reasons: (...confidential...) I think Company B as a company probably in London, are probably behind the curve when it comes to digital marketing of the brand. We have spent money and put effort into updating the 'company b website, in terms of look and the ease of use. We have also improved our global network and refer to those on our site. That's improved. We also had an initiative of having a Company B app, but it is very...we haven't done much with it. I believe part of the issue to be honest; there is probably an age profile in the management in Company B. They are an older generation. I really don't think they have copped on to how the world has changed. It's interesting to see the initiatives coming from the management at the moment on the IT marketing side of outselling to property. For instance, in New York, where there are higher volumes; they have taken the risk and invested more in IT. There are a lot of good ideas happening there that are not allocated in an Irish, UK or European environment, yet. So, I think Company B, as being one of the big bears of the residential business, they are behind the curve. A. Because of the lack of understanding and lack of initiative around IT. The other reason might be that Company B is such a big business, that if I decide about a good idea around something, it is harder to implement it over such a big organization. If the business was smaller, and let's say had an initiative around an app, it is easier to road test it and implement it. When an organization is so big, it's harder for them to go on and implement it; and have the same appetite for change. So in case I would like to launch an app or any other initiative, we would first need to reach out to the global team in London and have it approved.

What year did you start implementing mobile marketing?

2 years ago. The initiative started two years ago. London came up with strategy and Company B in Ireland were told: "this is what you are doing". The initiatives were mainly around the

website, that it should be more integrated with the overall network. The Company B app was rolled out, but not used. We became much better with email flyers. There will be a day when we won't be using printed vouchers any more. We print very few brochures. For a huge sale, around 18 million Euros: maybe 30. We use a PDF version of the voucher and email that. That would have been a big progression. We have also had big improvements with larger commercial sales. I have really gotten into using data websites. Basically, it enables you to upload all the property data. It isn't exactly a CRM. Agents can upload all the relevant information, floor plans, images, planning permissions, leases, cash flow documents, etc. You upload everything in the data room and then the buyers enter the data room and examine it. It gives me far greater insight on who came and looked, what documents they looked, gives me an indication of volume of interest, it shows how much search they have done, etc. I use that now a lot more. That didn't exist two years ago. Those data rooms are set up in London. So I would send them an email. They then provide me with a code that set up a website, a mini website and then I download my data. It is a fantastic tool, very useful.

What were the mobile marketing trends in the industry at the time of implementation and how do you believe the situation has changed since? How important do you think the use of mobile marketing is in the industry these days? How do you see the future of mobile marketing in the industry?

I haven't seen anybody grasp it in any way, really. I haven't really seen anybody being very creative or innovative in driving it. I think a lot of people talk about it, that it would be nice. What I have seen, though...you take the Hailo app, for instance. How that has transformed the taxi industry overnight. Nobody has developed something like that for the residential. The biggest progression has been in the residential marketing was 'portal a' and their website. That was a revolution, a progression. I haven't seen that being replicated, since. We are not in partnership with 'portal a'. We were offered this, we didn't participate in this and this decision came from the London office.

How do you see mobile marketing progressing further within the industry and within your own company?

I give you an example. The newspapers, for instance – I advertise most of our properties through the ‘company zz’. The Irish Times to me is my shop window. I spend a lot of money with the ‘company zz’ a year: 6-700 000 Euros a year in marketing. When I place those ads, I have a few pages of ads of properties. Those ads don’t appear online. Those ads don’t even appear on the ‘company zz’s website. That’s the company who I respect for being progressive, and yet, my ads are not on their website. Spending this money on print advertising, but they have very good online offerings and those ads don’t appear on it. Explain that to me...I think that’s madness. We would try to pull these ads from them if they don’t sort this out. The reason I am still focusing more on the press, because nobody has given me a better offering, yet. We haven’t been entrepreneurial or innovative enough to figure this out. I wonder, what would happen if we stopped advertising in the ‘company zz’? How would we still get the audience? And the audience is sometimes not necessarily the person that you are selling to, rather the person you want to sell for. A big reason we have a lot of the ads in the paper is that we want to impress the sellers. They will look at all the assets that we are selling. It has a due purpose: to create a brand perception and brand awareness of what we are doing and how big we are. We also use the ads to sell the asset or sell the service. I can’t sit here today and tell you what the evolution is going to be with regards to advertising in the ‘company zz’. Nobody has come to me with that solution.

With regards to other mobile marketing opportunities, how fast do you think your agency responded compared to your competitors?

Slow, very slow.

How you optimized your website to mobile devices? How will you go about it?

If you go on a tablet, our site is still not really optimized for that. There is still a lot to work on that. Optimizing the website is again part of the new initiative we are trying to take on board. The global office gives us plenty of authority, so the new manager will get a chance to implement all these changes. The management in London is light touch. Okay, they are there, but it’s like a big candy store. When I want things, I can go ahead, pick them out and use them. They are very helpful, but they are not very big-brotherish. We will have the

opportunity and freedom to turn things around. We would like to use the initiative.

Are you advertising online (paid advertising)? Are you using Search/Display (e.g. Google)? Are you using video advertising on YouTube? Impact? Are your advertising campaigns opted into the mobile platform? Are you using location targeting?

Where we advertise, and we did a campaign last year, is with banners on the website of the ‘company zz’. We also, for certain schemes and projects book lead banner on ‘portal a’ or ‘portal b’ for 2 months at a time. We should do search and location based targeting, but we don’t at the moment. (...confidential...)– don’t quote me on that. Not spending enough time, not paying enough attention to it, not valuing it enough. But that will change. I have a new marketing manager starting a month (new head of marketing), and under her leadership, it will change. Part of the reason I hired her was that she understood how we needed to change our marketing campaigns in order to meet the new realities of advertising.

We have plans for this as well. I don’t read the newspaper any more. I will look at Google News, I will look at Sky News sometimes, BBC sometimes. A lot of my clients do the same. People in the corporate world mainly visit news sites, so how do I place my ads on them? This should be a big focus. Google will be the main service we would use. Online is going to be the main focus for us once the new marketing manager starts. Google will be one of the main portals. RTE News will be one as well (‘company v’) did a big campaign on radio and online on RTE’s website. We should be doing something similar with the ‘company zz’ as well.

We don’t yet use location based targeting. I still believe that boards are critical when it comes to location-based targeting, if you will. When somebody wants to sell their house, you base your decision on seeing a real estate board with a “sold” sign on it. It encourages people when they see a new board on a property and then a few days later a “sold” sign. That can make all the difference. After we sell a property, the first thing we do is distribute flyers in the property’s neighborhood to all tenants pointing out that we have sold that house, are you considering selling? This is a big part to get business. I believe it is still more impactful that let’s say targeting with location-based online marketing. With the boards and then the flyers, you can target those 100 people living nearby. I can’t track down their email addresses. Putting

something in their letterbox I have confidence in, because there is a good chance they will see it. I believe this will remain like this for a while. I hardly see that it would change. What we don’t have here is an ownership list of properties. I don’t really know who owns a house, neither do I have an email address for them. If that changed, then the market would change.

We use YouTube, although UK uses it more than we would here. Through YouTube they give updates on sales, activities, might give you a flavor of the suburbs. They give you a preview of the neighborhood, the shops. We are looking into localizing that here in Dublin, absolutely.

How much time does it require to manage your mobile marketing?

It will get more attention than before. It will depend on the new marketing manager as well, so it is fairly hard to tell at the moment. But it will definitely require some time to catch up with the trend.

Are you using SMS/MMS service to contact your potential buyers? Is it a permission-based system? How does it work?

We do take people’s contact details, we take their email address and we do email saying that listen, this house is going on sale, or there is an offer in. Or, you have looked at such and such a house and another house becoming available on the next road. We do that. We do not use texting at all. Reason: lack of initiative. I believe texting is a good ideal, and we should do it, but we haven’t been.

The recession that hit Ireland and the residential industry...what happened here was we were really close to closing the residential part of the business 4 years ago. Then we reorganized it and that didn’t work out. Then we had to start again 2 years ago. So now we are in growth mode. I’d love to see us doing all these things, but we need to prioritize at the moment. Hopefully, in time we will get to those initiatives. The new marketing person will help me. Are we planning to do all this, absolutely! We just haven’t come around it, yet.

I have not received brochures in the post from other agents in the past 2-3 years, I would say. Everything I get is via email. We so rarely send out brochures any more. That’s a big transformation of the business. Over the last two years.

Are you using social media (e.g. Facebook)? What is your strategy and purpose?

We are using Twitter, but not very well. Facebook? Do we have a Facebook page? That's a good question. We have one from a colleague who left. Have we since put effort into it? I don't think so. We have a LinkedIn page. LinkedIn is a big missed opportunities. The negative view of LinkedIn to a large degree is that it is all about recruitment. People who are using LinkedIn are either looking for a job or they want to recruit. On saying that, I still have a habit of looking at it. I check who looked at my profile. When I go on linked – the thing I love is that you get to see who is looking at your profile. They are either thinking about looking for a job or they are in the market looking for service. They are looking for a reason. They look at my profile, which gives me the initiative to contact. We have a fantastic opportunity to use LinkedIn for all services and publications. None of the property advisors use LinkedIn. People are all professionals, so it is a good target.

Are you using QR codes? Where do you place the QR codes?

You know when you see an ad in the newspaper and that little box next to it and there is some way to take a photograph of it...what's it called? (QR code). We don't have that (I contradicted that as I saw one in the window of the office). We do have it here in the office, but we don't use them in our ads. We don't use them in the papers or on brochures. I don't even know how to use this...do you take a photograph? (I explained). Yes, we would definitely need to use that. (I also suggested that according to my findings, most companies believe these are overrated and apps are more important and useful). I don't disagree with that.

How do you believe customers perceive mobile marketing? What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign? What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign?

I believe smartphones will take over. Today people are using a lot of smartphones and tablets. I would absolutely look at properties on my smartphone and tablet. I would be using the app as well, although I would prefer 'portal a' or 'portal b'. It is pretty slick operation, easy to use and operates well. The thing is, if I use my Company B app, I only get to see one company's offerings

and properties. On 'portal a' and 'portal b', you get to see them all. As a customer, I probably would not be as selective and would most likely use the global provider's app.

Brand Trust – it is very important. Company B is very good at building brand trust. We are associated as a premium brand. It's like having a BMW parked in front of your house – you assume it must be a nice house. If you have Company Bs board in front of your house, it must mean that it is worth something. Company B don't sell rubbish properties. Especially I would see that in the network in London. If you are a high net worth individual, you will be drawn to the Company B website, the higher value assets. Ease of use – a lot of the websites are bloody difficult to use. It could take a day to figure out how to get to where you want.

Quality of information that has been provided – images sharp, hard definition. You need to get the information that is not too basic and that is not too much. The basics: photographs, floor plan, square footage and the price. What's very poor at the moment is updating that data. Nobody is brave enough to say my property is worth 750, but we have an offer for 800. Why don't we do that? But we don't. Let's say, I'm looking for a house, a property on your website is 750...however we have already received an offer of 800...we don't update that on our website and we really should. It is due to laziness.

100% of our properties are online. Whether it is a penthouse or an expensive block of apartment, everything is online. Because a lot of our clients are receivers and there is a legal obligation to insure you marketing the asset. The least you can say is that you put it online and it is out there. You can't say you did not market it. You have to give the market the opportunity to buy. Very important.

Do you have a CRM system? What are the features? What do you use your CRM system for?

We have a CRM system, but it is not used properly. It is pivotal platform. The main issue is the lack of data entry – people are lazy, and we don't make them accountable. Some people use it some don't and that's the problem with any CRM system. They are fantastic when they work. You should insure that the staff uses them and they normally don't. The platform is there, we just need to manage it and implement it. So for instance, when we receive in email, it will be recorded in the system with the date,

but not every time, and this makes things very inconsistent.

How do you measure the impact of mobile marketing with regards to relationship marketing?

We measure it a couple of ways. We have the ability to find out if they opened the email. Did they access it or did they just delete it? Then we see it from the responses back. "I've got your email, can you send me more information on such and such". I am not sure if we can currently check whether they opened the attachment on a PC or on a mobile device. We should look into that. It would be interested to say it. There is a lot more we should be doing, but the staff needs to be educated on these as well.

On the commercial side, there is a lot less face-to-face interaction already. I may meet the client 5 times over 6 months. Everything happens online – the data transfers, the emails, and conference calls. The personal interaction has been minimizing. The other expectation has been the speed. The turnaround has become so much faster. When I started in this business 14 years ago, you would only deal with a few properties. The technology is great now because you get to deal with a lot more volume. But the pressure that comes with it, that expectation for everything to turnaround quickly is more. It is an unwritten rule that if you don't reply to an email, there is something wrong. It is hard to manage; managed the speed and the turnaround. The online and mobile marketing have distanced the relationship with the clients. However that one-to-one face-to-face interaction is very important. We are people business, and a huge part of the overall experience. You win the business, A. because they believe you are good at what you do, and B. they like you and that you are someone they can deal with. It gets harder in a way to manage that relationship. It becomes more sterile and you are seen more as a brand and not a person. It has become more difficult to build that trust. It's harder to do that online.

Sellers, on the other hand need to know that you have the best technology in hand for selling their properties.

What we need is MI Management Information. The problem is that a lot of people in the property industry do not understand what MI is. The client wants instant information; they want to know if I am dealing with an asset, how many people have looked at it, the prices offered at the moment, how many ads you have placed. So if you ring me, I should be able to just press a button and

provide you with all the information you are interested in immediately. We don't have that, yet, but that is what the revolution will be in the business. If we get better with the MI, it will give us competitive advantage. You need to have the infrastructure, though, in terms of IT, a lot of training, accountability and the ability to force the use of it. It's hugely important. MI is critical. The industry will get there in the next two years. I haven't seen anybody delivering the platform. So I would love to have someone offering me the MI service. Google, for instance. Because of the volumes, we can't just send excel sheets and emails to everybody. It would take up a lot of time. MI would solve this issue. You have to be able to give your clients these valuable information immediately, but without an MI, you can't do that.

Do you believe retail shops and branches will remain important?

If you asked me three years ago, before I took over managing the business, naively I would have said the online marketing would close the majority of branches. What I have seen over the last 2 years, however, it is not the case. They are still important. A board in your neighborhood and a branch locally. That will have an effect on who you use. Local presence matters a lot more than you would think. But I couldn't tell the last time I went into a street agent's office to see their window. I wouldn't. And if I went to look for a property like you would, I would look online and wouldn't look for a branch. There is a delay in the business at the moment. Branches are expensive, you need to run them, so I'm trying to cut those back. But the others, they have

branches all over the place, costing them a fortune, and it's bleeding resources. Why not say, if it causes X to keep the branches, we could give that up and instead put a 20% of that into online and mobile marketing. We would probably get a better return. We are just not brave enough, yet. Once we have everything online and on mobile, in time, I see them reduce, but not disappearing completely.

How do you feel about the current climate? Is it harder to get buyers these days? Has mobile marketing helped you with keeping buyers and improve sales?

For the last 5 years, we have been in recession. Do you have any idea how difficult this has been for this particular market? 60% of our staff I had to make redundant. I closed 6 branches over the years. It's only the last 18 months the market has actually recovered. If I go back to PLC and tell them that I need a 100 thousand Euro to invest in mobile marketing, new platforms and spending this on online marketing...it is just not going to happen. Our clients pay for the press and print advertising. I get the benefit of having my logo on the ads. I am not going to suddenly advertise and replicate this online if the client is not going to pay for it. I need to replicate that interaction where I get to make them pay for it and I get the free benefit. Things are improving. There are younger people coming in the business with a digital mindset and more IT literacy. That will help changes as well. The audience is changing, too. The interaction with the media is changing. I only read newspaper on Monday. Everything else I do on a mobile device. When it comes to real estates, there is a big difference in the

behavior of the younger and the older generation. The older generation is more likely to visit branches or checking the 'company zz'.

Apart from mobile marketing, what other channels are you using for marketing properties? How would you rank them based on importance or priorities? How would you rank them based on sales impact?

1. Press, 2. Board 3. Online. Both sales and priorities. Priority will change to online and mobile with the new manager.

How do you insure that all the channels and platforms are integrated?

Our marketing division takes care of that. They will produce a business plan, giving the recommendations and the rationale. We will discuss it and then let the marketing department implement it. We will focus on it is reflects the same image.

What is the main purpose of mobile marketing? Is it fully integrated into multi-channel marketing?

Not yet, but it will be very soon. We are behind with mobile marketing, but with the new manager, we have major plans to improve.

What percent of your marketing budget do you allocate to mobile marketing?

70% is on press and print (brochures, flyers, advertising in the national press), sponsorship, boards, banners, sport days, community events, merchandize, and online marketing. No TV, no radio.

Interview Transcript 3 – Company C

Can you please tell me a little bit about your main responsibilities?

We started in 2000. We were part of a 'global agency group' for 10 years, before we became Company C. We started as a 'global agency group' franchise in Dublin. I think we were one of the first seven offices that opened. If you go back to those days, most of marketing would have been through our signs, then maybe newspaper advertising. Now we pay 'portal a' and 'portal b' to display our ads. We are in partnership as they are so important. 'portal a' is critical for house sales. If we have rentals, then it's 'portal b'. They are the two Dublin websites that we use. We just come in in the morning and have an array of emails from people seeing property on those portals. So 'portal a' does the marketing for us.

I am in charge of everything. During the boom, we had 7, now it's the 3 of use. So we have had to change the way we operated. Back 6-7 years ago, 80% percent of our income came from house sales. 20% came from lettings, property management and evaluations. We have had to change the way we operate so that now, 80% of our income is from lettings, property management and evaluations, and only 20% is from sales. That's what we had to do to survive. Everybody would prefer house sales, because they are easier in a sense. You don't have to travel as much. With property management and rental, it is more intensive. We have really had to change the way we do business ourselves. It has been a rough few years, but I think we are getting there. We have built up our property management and we are getting an income from that. We also know we get an amount of lettings to do each month. Sales are still the question mark. Residential sale is coming back in Dublin. Everything house we get to sell now sells within 4 weeks, normally. House prices are up as well. Whereas in 2 years, we had the problem to sell and you didn't know when they were going to sell. So you had to rely on projections. We couldn't say, okay, we have a 300 000 property, so 1% of commission, 3000 euro income. We were not sure when we were going to get it. At least this year, when we get the properties in, we know we will get the income. It is still a little bit shaky.

We couldn't stay with 'global agency group'. They wanted too much money from us. They had 80 branches in the country. When the recession hit, they

didn't really do anything to keep it together. Then everybody said we are going to cut our fees and keep the core of 25 branches, so when the upturn comes back up, we can reposition. They just took the attitude of if it disappears, then so be it, good luck. I can't believe they actually did it. When you consider all the money we would have spent promoting the brand and get it up there. That's where we lost thousands...when we had to change the brand. We started up with Company C. I didn't realize we would lose so much by changing our name. People were asking when we redid the office, so where has 'global agency group' gone. We kept telling them, oh, we are still here...but they didn't see it as that. That has been the biggest change and we almost had to start from scratch, again.

Marketing team – now it's only 3 of us, and I am in charge of marketing. We don't have a separate department for this. We have been using 'portal a', so that make things much easier.

Why did you decide to implement mobile marketing? What actions did you take prior to implementing mobile marketing?

There was an increased demand for advertising online and on mobile and an increased demand for 'portal a'.

What were the mobile marketing trends in the industry at the time of implementation and how do you believe the situation has changed since? How important do you think the use of mobile marketing is in the industry these days? How do you see the future of mobile marketing in the industry?

When we opened, websites really weren't used, say this was in 2000. If you got a property in, you would put it on your window and maybe put an ad in one of the evening newspapers. That's the way it was done back then. But then early 2000s 'portal a' became more recognized. When we went to visit somebody who wanted to sell their property, we kept asking if they were using at the websites to sell or search for properties. The more we asked, the more people started to go online. Then, 'portal a' came to use as well and we knew we had to use. Suddenly, this became where you had to place your property and showcase a property. You could see photographs, descriptions, everything. That has changed the market.

Mobile marketing has a big impact on the overall marketing strategies of real estate

agencies. There are some things in the industry, however, that won't change, e.g. human factor hasn't changed.

I saw that you have a website optimized to mobile phone. How is it different from your original website and what factors did you take into consideration when deciding on the content and the layout?

Company C website is optimized from mobile now. Our own website is not properly optimized yet, but it is in the pipeline. We are in the process of doing that.

How is your mobile app different from your mobile site? What is its main purpose and what functions are available?

We don't have a mobile app. I could tell 'company c group' that we would want to introduce an app, but I would know what the answer would be: no. We don't have the money to do that – it is the financial aspects. In order to keep the business together, they dropped their fees, so there are fewer budgets for marketing. Let's say 'global agency group' charges around a 1000 euro, PP in order to keep the show on the road, they just charge 250. If 'global agency group' had done that, we would have kept the whole thing together. 'global agency group' pretty much let their patients die. They haven't added an office in the last 4 years. If they kept us alive, their business would be much better in Ireland.

We are using 'portal a' and they have a mobile-optimized website and a mobile app. Some people don't agree with this, but I don't think our Company C website is as important as 'portal a' or 'portal b'. These are so important. So, if our properties didn't go on our website, I don't think it would make a huge difference. If they weren't on 'portal a' or weren't on 'portal b', that would make a huge difference. If you were to sell your property tomorrow, and I would say look, I am not going to put it on 'portal a' or 'portal b', we are just going to rely on our window and site and that's it, I know we would get 10% of the calls we should get. We have a sign on the property, we have it on our window, but after that, without these portals, things would be just so difficult. Whatever 'portal a' charges, you have to pay. That is a given. You must pay 'portal a', you must pay 'portal b', or you are gone.

Are you advertising online (paid advertising)? Are you using Search/Display (e.g. Google)? Are you using video advertising on YouTube? Impact? Are your advertising campaigns opted into the mobile platform? Are you using location targeting?

We have been doing Google AdWords for the last 4 years. Now I am not sure whether we maximize it or not, but we get a bill from Google every month. We have our website, but it isn't really mobile maximized, so that has to be done. So, we still need to check how much it is worth it for us to advertise on Google. Are we getting the necessary lead from those ads? We are questioning our spend. Some weeks you can get 4 queries and then for 3 months, you get nothing. I suggested getting in touch with Google for optimization.

We need to advertise and we need this, but we need to optimize it, as it was more productive earlier. We are appearing well, 1-2-3 positions. We have visibility, our ads are there, but we have not made the best out of this advertising option. We need to analyze our landing page, our offerings and see what can be done to improve quality. Maybe our fees are higher, so we don't actually know and we need to do more research. We need to research what others do as well. You never know why you lose the business. However, when people come from Google AdWords, we seem to have a much better chance getting the business. We get very good leads.

We only use search. It comes up number one most of the time for rentals. We don't use YouTube. There is a girl who is still with 'global agency group', and she uses Facebook and YouTube a lot more. We don't use these that much, but I have noticed she posts positive energy type messages on Facebook. When we advertise, we never look to the people who are looking to buy or rent, because we know they are going to 'portal a' or 'portal b'. A lot of people still come through the door, though. We had a new girl starting with us two years ago, and she couldn't believe the amount of people still walking in our office looking for sales. It's hard to sell for people who come through the door, though, because you may have 10 properties displayed for sale or rent, and there is a good chance they may not like those. Whereas, if you go online and onto 'portal a', you find all our properties. You need to look at the website, put in the parameters and bam, there you will find what you are looking for. I don't know why they come through the door – maybe they are around looking for a property.

The purpose of the website, especially the 'portal a' mobile is to find the buyers. What we use our website for (...confidential...) is for tenant enquiries, to find a landlord in the city. We will need to use location targeting, though, but not sure how to target a specific area within Dublin. We use AdWords for new contacts (sellers, landlords) that can produce income. And then, you may find those who want you to manage that property for the next 5 years. When you think of Google AdWords, you can tell it is worth it. We can name a person a month whom we get income from.

Are you using SMS/MMS service to contact your potential buyers? Is it a permission-based system? How does it work?

No. We couldn't do texting, not even permission-base. That would be too intensive. What I do is that I would take your name, the first most important thing, and then your mobile number, the second most interested thing. Now, everybody gives their mobile number. It used to not be like that – they used to give their landline, but this has changed. Mobile to mobile is now so much cheaper; it's not even an issue anymore. So we would call, we wouldn't text. You talk to people. It's always on the phone and people are asking questions. Also, when you talk to people on the phone you can sense whether they are motivated or interested to buy. You can also only teas information out from the clients over the phone.

Are you using social media (e.g. Facebook)? What is your strategy and purpose?

We left 'global agency group' for years ago. During that time, Facebook was not very strong. I would say now it is and they get all the trainings to keep them up to date. Whereas Company C is more co-op and it doesn't have all the resources 'global agency group' does. 'global agency group' is a giant. I have a say in Company C, we all decide together on the strategy.

We do have a Facebook page. We are not on Twitter or LinkedIn. Somebody said that they put their properties on LinkedIn, but I just don't think...I just feel that if you take anybody that sits in their Dublin home – they are either a renter or would be purchasers, so they would go to 'portal a' for sales or 'portal b' for rentals. They would not go anywhere else. Sometimes it happens that by accident people call me and say they saw my ad on x website, but that is 'portal b' anyway. All they have

done was bought all these websites, y website, etc. and they just stream all the property. That's the way I see. If you don't showcase your properties with them, you are lost.

Are you using QR codes? Where do you place the QR codes?

We don't use them. I don't think they are that important. I know 'company y' made a big deal out of them, but if you look at any properties that get sold, I know where they came from. 80% from 'portal a', 20% would say I drove by a sign and then a few would come in our office. Even 85% would come from 'portal a' when it comes to sales. For rentals, the percentage coming from 'portal b' is even higher.

Compared to your competitors, do you believe you are making the most out of mobile technology? With regards to mobile marketing opportunities, how fast do you think your agency responded compared to your competitors?

No, I don't think we do and they may have competitive advantage. Having said that, we do use 'portal a' and the take care of pretty much everything for us. We are definitely behind. We have lost our focus on residential, but this year we are focusing more on that again. We have even new Google Ads for our residential business.

I believe business focusing on mobile and digital marketing will eventually have competitive advantage. Definitely. With regards to the younger generation, the smartphone-savvy generation, they still don't make up a high proportion of our sellers, but they do make up a bulk of the people who are buying or renting. So, the sellers are around age 35+ and way above. Most of them are in their 50s or even 60s. As time goes by, maybe within the next 5-10 years, digital and mobile marketing will be increasingly important due to the currently growing digital generation.

How do you believe customers perceive mobile marketing? Do you believe digital marketing will impact the importance of retail shops?

It is a very interesting question. We discuss this in the office so often. Now the answer to this answer, you have to have an office. If you do not have an office on the high street, you stop existing as a licensed agent. You can't run our

business from your sitting room. Renting, maybe, but you can't do house sales. Clients are looking for someone who has been in the business and has an office, who is perceived as a local expert, a local agent. In order to promote that, you have to have a local office. Otherwise you could run it from here (the hotel). At some point you might think about it, but it is not worth taking the risk. I've got a high street office, it is costing me too much and I don't really need it, but if you close it, you disappear from the face of the earth. That's the one business you can't purely just do online. You need to back up your digital presence. It's hard to figure out why, but if you go down to a micro-level, say husband and wife, and they are looking into buying a home, or they want to sell, the first they do is discuss who they think they should sell the property with. The answer: the best local agents. Maybe, they could find that from the website, but in their own head they perceive that they need a local expert from a local office. Let's say, 3 agencies go for an initial screening to the couple's house, one each day. They then sit down and decide whom they are going with. They will choose whom they perceive is the best agents – they may have decided that before they even met anybody.

What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign?

Brand Trust - Others might be based on trust - let's say I know an agent, but they are not specialized in my local area; I would still ask them to help me sell my property. So you go to different agents for different reasons. It can be just the personal contact, way out of their area. Most agents say yes. 1. Brand 2. Do they like you as a person? 3. Fees and charges (value – the marketing is very prices sensitive). You can lose a property for two good reasons: if you misprice the house, and the second one is if your fee is not perceived as fair. You can watch people's faces and see the reaction to the price we tell them – from that you will know if they are happy or you ended up losing the business. You can lose them in a sentence.

Buying a house can be a long process. How do you keep your customers engaged along the way from a relationship marketing perspective? How has mobile marketing changed your interaction methods with customers?

We still mainly keep in touch on the phone and face-to-face. This is a very personal business. I don't think, however that mobile marketing has changed the way we do our business. Let's say if you

go back to the day when somebody picked up the Evening Herald, so a property, and then they made a phone call to the agents. The same thing happens today, just through mobile marketing. Except that with mobile marketing, it is a more instant and it's right there. But they do call you directly, just like before. The first contact is normally a phone call, and then some others would now just send an email from their smartphone to see when that house is on for viewing. But it's not that much different from the newspaper ad. The second thing the person does is still the same: either they phone or now they email. The next we would then do is set up a property. I think mobile made it more instant for people.

Do you have a CRM system? What are the features? What do you use your CRM system for?

We had that with 'global agency group', but we don't have it with Company C. We are just not developed for that. Now I know 'global agency group' always says that you build up this massive base, email address, so you can text/email them, tell them this, tell them that. But even during the boom we didn't really do that, because the business was coming to us anyway. The key to the boom was that there was so much money available in the system, but it was so much easier just to sell the property. I'm not saying that agents didn't have to do their job, but things were working out without the CRM system as well.

We have paper-based information. It has to be paper-based. We have to keep all of our paper-based files for 6 years, under that law. Under the new property services PSRA you have to keep it. First of all, they have changed it so now you need to have a contract with the customer, whether if it's for sale or for rental. So, that has created even more papers. We did 2-page-documents before, now it's 8 pages. Every times somebody makes an offer; you have to keep that on file as well.

Do you see your business moving onto a CRM system eventually? If when we had it, I don't think we really used it. There were 7 people there in the office; none of us thought we would need to have this. There might be glamour for it, so people in the business think they need to have this. During the boom, we would be put out 10 thousand leaflets every 6 weeks. Each agent had an area in the north city to farm. We have started doing that again. It's still important from a branding point of view and it is especially important if you have just sold a house, when you can actually tell those 200 houses around the sold property that you have actually sold

something in the area. You can do that by leaflets. Everybody has predicted that there will be paperless office by now, but I don't see evidence of that, really. We don't use tablets when meeting clients.

You mention on your website that you provide developed and perfected marketing tools and up-to-date database.

Everybody says that. That's bullshit. If somebody tells you that they have got buyers for your property before you put it on your market, always a lie. Every agent does it. But to me, that's the worst lie – they don't have anybody! They may think that some guy who looked at the house last week nearby might also be interested in this new property, but they don't know that for sure.

How do you measure the impact of mobile marketing with regards to relationship marketing?

You know that if you put the property up on 'portal a' for sale or 'portal b' for rent, you know it is just going to happen.

Apart from mobile marketing, what other channels are you using for marketing properties? How would you rank them based on importance or priorities? How would you rank them based on sales impact?

Boards are important, because if someone lives on a street and they are considering selling, they see this sign goes up and then they see that it was agreed and sold in a few weeks, they will have trust. We have definitely got properties for that reason. 'global agency group' always said, if you had 33% of the signs in an area with 500 houses, you were the dominant agents – that's how you measure it. Something you can find that it could be about 50%. 60% of the signs would be from local agents.

How do you insure that all the channels and platforms are integrated?

We make sure everything is integrated. You look at the different channels of marketing and you always make sure you create the same image. Ideally, we would love to do something like McDonalds – you can seem them everyone when they are in campaign, and you wouldn't think that it is that persuasive, but it is. We could get our business out at that level, we would probably be market leaders, but we couldn't afford it. You just need to work with the resources that you have. We just need to figure out how to get to our potential sellers and customers. How do we reach out to them? It's difficult.

What percent of your marketing budget do you allocate to mobile marketing?

We don't do any print, I mean any newspaper prints, unless the customer pays for it and request it. We can advertise in the newspaper for their request, but they will have to pay for that. With regards to what we spend now, if we were to put your property on 'portal a', 'portal b', and our website, brochures, signage, then we have an upfront fee of 370 euro for the property we get to sell. The marketing is paid for by the customer, not by us.

The printing would be 15%, 'portal a' and 'portal b' and Google AdWords = 1000 euro. We are about to order 10 000 leaflets for a 150 euro. We will probably do that every 3 months. You need to do that as well. You don't really know what the value of that may be, but you still

need to do it. Agents believe that it is necessary to say that we are here, especially when we are looking for properties to sell. It's more of a brand building exercise.

Overall, how has mobile marketing impacted your overall marketing strategy?

It has speeded up the business. – rest above. Even though everything is online now, people still want the printed brochures. They see the online version online, but when I meet them, they request a printed copy.

How effective do you believe your mobile marketing strategy is?

'Portal a' and 'portal b' are our main focus, as well as online advertising.

These are very effective, although we still need to optimize our AdWords campaign.

What is your plan for the future with regards to mobile marketing? What steps are you taking to insure competitive advantage?

We need to do a mobile version of our own website as well. Company C do, but we have our own. The company's website is more important than Company C website, although it is not a tenants based site, it is more for landlords, and nothing else. We need to link in that site with 'portal b' as well, which shows how many apartments we let a month. We don't have our lettings there. We also do commercial lettings. Company C shows the houses for sales and advertise them on 'portal a'.

Interview Transcript 4 - Company D

Can you please tell me a little bit about your main responsibilities?

In terms of Company D, I am responsible for any third party advertising that's on the side, and I am responsible for developing any new opportunities that may come from either third parties or products so we believe that could commercially be viable for the company or thrive new users or visitors to the site. I also manage our relationship with our third party sales house, who also sell advertising on the site. I look after the overseas section and do some work with IrishTimes.com as well. Very diverse. I do lots of different stuff, a lot of which involves developing new products of if we have that we think by which we can do better. I work from the commercial side of and I work with the development team to see what we can or can't do. I've been with the company for 7.5 years. Company was established in 2001.

How is your marketing department structured and what are the different marketing areas the department is divided onto? Do you have a person/team in charge of digital and mobile marketing? Did you hire somebody specializing in mobile marketing or you trained your own staff?

We work with the 'company zz' and we are wholly owned by them. As part of that we have a resource that we use as our marketing manager and so she works within the IT marketing team, therefore she taps into the wider group as well. So we have for our marketing strategy is two fold - one is within the paper, which is big part of the group and we do significant radio campaigns. We have done on street stuff as well. When we are in campaign, and we are nearly always in campaign, we would have a specific monthly budget that goes towards AdWords and Network spend. The focus is to driving new visitors to the site, but also for downloading apps. We constantly try to drive more and more people to are apps.

Why did you decide to implement mobile marketing? What actions did you take prior to implementing mobile marketing?

We helped (...confidential...) introduce their app. When the market was particularly bad in terms of residential sales, we took that as an opportunity to re-look at our business and what we were doing. At the time we had outsourced a lot of our IT development team, but at this stage we said we would bring it back

in the house. We rebuilt our whole backend platform in terms of how these these state agents deal with that. Then, we also re-developed the front end. At that stage we bought a company that had a CRM package. The product itself was called property selector. From that we had a100-150 state agents around the country who were using a CRM package that was on a platform that was probably out of date and had to be redeveloped. We redeveloped that, built it in with our backend. Then we realized, hold on as second, we are an advertising portal, and we are doing well, but now we have this relationship with a 150 clients who we can probably offer more to. So, we offered them a CRM package to help their business. The first stage was to start offering websites. We started developing websites for these agents. To help the agents, they were able to upload a property onto our backend, which would then push up to the website and also to their website; therefore they did not need to do that twice. From there, they were able to manage that sale process through using that data. As an extension of that, as mobile started to become more attractive and some of the bigger brands decided that they want to be on mobile as that. We were now able to use our platform through our API with the website to create mobile apps ourselves. So we created one ourselves. We have gone through that pain and process, so we thought that we can offer apps to clients on an individual bases as well. We did the first app for 'company x', we did one for Lisney, and we have done a couple of others as well. It is the agents decision whether they want a mobile app or a mobile-optimized site, or both.

What were the mobile marketing trends in the industry at the time of implementation and how do you believe the situation has changed since? How important do you think the use of mobile marketing is in the industry these days? How do you see the future of mobile marketing in the industry?

More requests have come in, although state agents and realtors, the vast majority of the traffic and leads come from the property portal. So a lot of our agents would be happy to see us invest and develop new functions and platforms as opposed to them having to invest for their own sake. Bigger groups lwho have multiple branches around the country, I guess it is different, because they are supporting their whole network; whereas those with only an office or two may not go down that road. For them it doesn't

make a huge amount of sense to have a mobile app, because you also have to invest in trying to get people to download. So the route to a mobile vendor site is probably a route that is becoming more popular.

36% percent of our traffic now comes from mobile. That has grown and continues to grow month on month. We have reached a million unique users first time in May. We have over 2.5 million visiting the site every month. My belief is when I see the numbers is that the split will be even around 40% this month coming from mobile. The key element is that in May we launched our new mobile vendor site. So these people that weren't using our app used to get a desktop version of our site on their tablet and mobile device. It was awful, but now we are getting a mobile site.

There has to be an element of different ways of marketing property. The board outside a house is a key element if somebody drives by, for those who live in that area or like that area. From a branding point of view for a state agent that has their brand on the road and for them a couple of days later have a 'sold' sign on it is critical when it comes to impressing sellers. So from that point of view is hugely important. The paper service is still a demand and need for a certain demographic, the older and more affluent demographic. They will look through the paper as a way of seeing properties coming on board. There is again a brand thing. Agents want to be seen as a big brand; therefore advertise in the paper as well. It is a good image that you can be in the paper with us as well. Some people see that as a big benefit. To be quite honest, if the state agents weren't getting results from the papers, they would have stopped advertising there. They are not it for the good of their own health. They no doing it because it looks they. They actually need to be present in the paper. Certainly from a commercial point of view, it works; I have a no doubt. As being part of a newspaper organization, we see that the property section has improved again in the paper, and that is against the trend, that is obviously circulation dropping and the volumes. So there is still a demand there. I suppose what we looked at was that a lot of agents had their shop front in high streets. A lot of those agents in terms of saving cost have moved from having to be on high streets, having to be in the prime location. They can have a presence off the high streets, because the majority of their presence is online. I think in

Ireland, and maybe it is different in other countries, but in Ireland, people still like to have the option to walk into an office as opposed to going to a home or a home office. Their perception is that they are going to a retail unit. A lot of rental agents work from home and they can manage their properties from home with their phone and laptop and can work from wherever they are. I think this can work for a small business, but once you scale up; there is a trust element as well. I think that again it's security: if something goes wrong, I know where you are and I can knock on your door. If you are looking at the American model, which is one individual selling the property, it may be different. Here in Ireland, it tends not to be like that here. You may have a couple people working together, couple of negotiators, etc. Nobody is just doing property sales. They are doing rentals as well or property management or commercial, so one person may not be enough.

I am aware that Company D worked together with a company to introduce the first mobile app in the industry. With regards to other mobile marketing opportunities, how fast do you think your agency responded compared to your competitors?

We responded very fast. We were the first ones.

I saw that the website optimized to mobile phone. How is it different from your original website and what factors did you take into consideration when deciding on the content and the layout?

We took the template of our app. We spent a lot of time on our app and it worked well. We had history of analytics, so we knew that it was working well and the users were engaging with it. They were staying on it for a reasonable time. Phase one of the mobile site was to really offer the search option. We wanted offer the search option in different categories, finance areas to apply for mortgage. There is an advertising element to it as well, obviously, because the agencies want to be on mobile. They feel that there is money to be spent advertising on mobile, we wanted to make sure they had something to offer. From that point of you, that was the design. We have lots of new elements we can offer on it. For instance, the image gallery is still fairly flat at the moment. Not that we did not have enough time, but we felt that the product was good enough for phase one and we wanted to get it out in the market. There are lots of different elements we are working on. We just received a request this morning from a property

sales manager to change the add position on the brochure pages as it is potentially conflicting with the position of the contact of the agent. So, there is still a lot to work on. Myself, head of IT operations and couple of the developers came together and decided what we would need. We decided on what the key elements to make the use of the site a decent experience. Now we can focus on adding more functions and features to it. I have looked at including blog, service directory, and future properties on the landing page. I have looked at the idea of geo-targeting particular properties on that home page. So those properties can appear that are in your area.

How is your mobile app different from your mobile site? What is its main purpose and what functions are available?

We have the "near me" functionality. So, you can enter the street and check what's near you. That will probably come to our mobile site as well. That is a strong element of what people want. The way our site is structured, it works well. Our URLs are built in a way that we can target based on the location of searches. There is a lot of skepticism about targeting desktops with geo-targeting, as it depends on where the service provider is based. On mobile, you have the ability to geo-target properly. That's a route where we will go down fairly quickly.

Are you advertising online (paid advertising)? Are you using Search/Display (e.g. Google)? Are you using video advertising on YouTube? Are your advertising campaigns opted into the mobile platform? Are you using location targeting?

Mainly search; that's the core of it. When we are in campaign, we would have creative we use for display. But really search is where it drives more traffic. There are different messages we wanted to get out at a certain time. We also would buy from network. We did a campaign for Cork, Limerick, Galway at the earlier part of the year. We were able to try and get particular websites in the particular areas. It's hard, really, as it is only ourselves and a couple of classified sites we can target via the URL, via what areas people are searching in. There are certain things you can target well locally. We also looked at Leinster Rugby, GAA sites, etc. They have fairly reasonable network price.

We haven't used YouTube. It's just one of those things we haven't done. It's not unconscious; we never got to it. We don't have creative optimized, ... it is just something we need to do, but haven't done! We know it's cost effective. I think

when we go into campaign in the autumn; we will probably use it. There isn't any doubt we will use it.

Online advertising is opted into mobile and we have a re-direct. So if somebody searches from a mobile device, it directs him or her automatically to our mobile site. We also give them the option to download the app at the top, because the engagement is still better on the app. If you get them to get the app onto their device, they will be more likely to come back, then. It's optimized, so whatever device you search with, you should get to the right page. What we have made a decision that everything from a tablet and up will see the full version. Anything from a tablet down will see the mobile page. We felt that the experience was good enough still on tablet, rather than redesign for a third platform, and the feedback has been good.

We haven't had to spend as much on AdWords as we would have had to in the past. The change that we made previously on our site, the guys did a huge amount of work on our SEO and URLs, so from a Google point of view, we have improved our rankings significantly. So we wouldn't have to spend as much as before. Also, we have more website we have producing and working with agents, so their ranking have gone up as well, so we are pretty happy that agents get better traffic to their site as well. That helps our other products. I suspect (don't know for sure) that the competition in Ireland for keywords is probably lowered within the industry, so others probably are not spending as much. There is not a race to outbid each other.

Are you using SMS/MMS service to contact your potential buyers? Is it a permission-based system? How does it work?

Email, definitely. We have a database for 75 000 users. We call them members, in terms of they would sign up for our newsletter or they would have signed in for notification. That's the key traffic driver for us. So, for instance they would search for certain areas and we would send them notification about properties in the given area. They can click to see more details.

The key to bringing out the mobile site was that, again in the past, they were sent to the desktop version of the site, which wasn't ideal. Stage one was to drive them to the mobile site to that voucher, so the experience is better. Stage two is that we drive them onto the app. So if they have the app, they go straight to the app. That will be in the next couple of weeks. Then we would have Friday feedback email –

normally some property related, maybe something controversial (something in the paper, property tax). So they can have them say. We do that monthly. We are very cautious that we don't want to spam them. But we know from our drop-down rates that we are doing well. We are growing in terms of sign-ups.

We don't do text messaging. We had done text messaging, marketing in a campaign earlier in the year, partnering with O2. I don't know if it was hugely successful. My own personal opinion, that it is a step back. I get the O2 text message about general promotion. It's rarely that I would click into something that they send. It is far more likely if I get an email, a well-presented email where I can see properly on a mobile device, I am more likely to click in. It also helps if I know it is a mobile site. But maybe that's just me.

Are you using social media (e.g. Facebook)? What is your strategy and purpose?

With our blogs, we use Facebook and Twitter – 11 000 followers on Facebook, around 4000 on Twitter. My feeling is that Twitter has become more of an industry platform, and Facebook is more of a user platform. We see a lot more of the stage agent community going on Twitter in terms of promoting properties. Agents will go onto Twitter and push a property that they have. I don't really know why they are doing it in term of the strategy, because they don't have the audience. I have seen agents doing it on Facebook, where they would push the property and kind of going...surely, they are friends, but they are not necessarily going to be buying properties. So if somebody posts 10 properties on their Facebook feed, what's the point of that? What have tried to do with the agents is to encourage them to use Twitters is that they post a new property that they have, we will re-tweet it, so more mass audience. Hopefully this initiative will drive more people to use it. From an agent point of you, it is a great source of information. If they are looking for information they can actually follow the industry (what is happening in the industry, what are other agents talking about, etc.). There is a lot of stuff that happen in the UK that follows here sometimes. From our own point of view, you will get the news if you went onto Twitter and followed Company D property, you would probably get the more up-to-date news. We have a dedicated person who uploads the latest news early in the morning. From a Facebook point of view, competitions tend to be what we are running through

there. It's more of a user focus. It drives traffic to our blogs, for instance. Does it hugely grow our business? Probably not. It is just something we need to have and I'm glad we do it. It's like an extra. Again, I don't think if we turned it of, we would have customers ringing us up asking about it. From a users point of you, would they miss it? Probably not. We are there and we got them, and they are engaged with us. We are happy to keep feeding them information that way.

Are you using QR codes? Where do you place the QR codes?

We have used them. I probably jumped on the QR code because of my sister-in-law who lives in Japan, where everyone is using QR codes. So, I figured this might work. So we were the first ones market with QR codes here. Sorry, that's a like. I think 'compnay zz' was the first to market with QR codes. We had discussed it but we hadn't implemented anything. I think 'company zz' had in in paper, I think, in the paper ad. So, we figured, let's just role that out, so we did. It was pretty straightforward to use. I don't think anyone really uses them, though. I think if Apple or Google decided to have an integrated QR code function app within their off-the-shelf production, then maybe. I think that fact that you have to go and download an app, I think it will kill it.

We give the options for our agents for any of the printed brochures they put out on the window; that will bring them directly to the website brochure. However, if I turned it off tomorrow, I don't think agents would complain and ask where it has gone. We might get one or two, but I don't think we get many people screaming and shouting for it.

What factors do you believe are the most important for a successful mobile marketing campaign? How do you believe customers perceive mobile marketing?

I suspect it is probably user experience. I suspect that it is the ability to do things easier and easier way. I think the content is very standard. If you find a property for sale on the portal, on a website or on a brochure or the state agent's window...it is pretty much the same information. Copy and paste it in the same format. I think good quality content is very important. Our goal, our job is to make sure that we have as much of the content across the country as we can get in terms of property sales. That is our goal. The key urban areas is where a strengths is.

That's where the market is at the moment and most transactions. We are constantly fighting to get all those agents on board from around the country. From a customer perspective, coming to a portal and perceive that they are not getting the full picture is no good. So, again, from a user point of you is content. If they can't find everything on our site, they will go somewhere else. And also user experience, so to make sure things are easy to find and customer have access to as much information as possible. For instance, donedeal.ie is a great website, an excellent website in terms of its content. If you are going to there to buy or sell something, you will find the most content. Does is look right? My own opinion that it probably doesn't, it could be better, but it absolutely serves its purpose. Users don't care; they really don't care. Their mobile experience is far better than the desktop experience. The obviously create a desktop, but then they focused on mobile. That's the route it is going to go. That is prettier and better looking sites out there for buy an sell, used to be better looking sites. But donedeal.ie is the market leaders. So, users want to content first and then the look only comes after that.

Does mobile marketing help brand trust? Potentially, you could find that if I am looking to sell my house and I go to an agent and I find that they have a mobile strategy and their site is well developed from a first experience that would be important and I would probably go to them. Some others might not care, though. They may thing that a good board higher up on the road or putting an ad in the paper will do the work. So, in terms of the...I think from a perceptual point of you, I fundamentally believe that an agent's website is important. It is important to have presence. I am not sure if users who are willing to buy a house will go: I am going to go to the 'company zz's site, I'm going to go the Lisney's site, or 5 other separate sites. They won't. They will probably go to a portal they know has them all.

Trust is very important when it comes to selling a house. I need to trust that agent that he or she could sell my house. That is where the mobile stuff comes in. You may think if a company has a mobile app or a mobile site, they are innovative, they know what they are doing, so I'll just go to them. They are going to be more creative down the road than someone with a one-dimensional site. Which happens. It is important how properties present their inventory. Presenting your inventory properly is a key element for the business. We have seen the awful pictures, we have seen the great pictures, and it makes a huge difference in traffic.

People click onto the pictures before they look at anything else. That's what they do. Users spend about 10 minutes a visit on the portal. They are clicking in, looking imaging. Our CTR on the image gallery on the residential sale property can be upto 1%. I think it is one of the elements of the agents pitching themselves as opposed to a potential buyer going from another direction.

Do you have a CRM system? What are the features? What do you use your CRM system for?

Yes, we do. An agent would have a database with people that would have contact them with an interest in certain areas. When they look at the profile of a new property, they do a search in the CRM to see who would match that. They will get first go. From the potential buyers point of you, they feel good because they get the advantage and a first go before it goes out in the market. From an agent point of you, they get those who are interested. Text messaging is part of the communication, but I am not sure they are the most effective communication channels. I get the feeling that they still may ring them up. Pick the phone up and see if they really are interested in the property. I think people like to ring up. In our industry, a lot of stuff happens on email, but that happens via email after we probably built that relation with the customer. So we would have met them and spoke to them on the phone and have meeting with them. So you don't just start talking to someone via email. First, you have a conversation and build some sort of a relationship.

I would love to tell more but I am not sure I know more. The purpose behind it is that when a phone call comes in initially from someone interested in either buying a property or selling a property, the person who takes that call creates a contact in the system. That person then who is looking to sell the property will go through the, what we call workflow and go through the initial conversation. The agent may go out to see the property. They will be a letter of agreement. All these letters and information and the individual phases have to be done, so we have created this workflow for them, to keep the agents in line of exactly what's happening. Everything is stored online. The brochures, the offers track, any spend on advertising is tracked, and then as it is sold, a bill can be created for the advertising or the percentage of the fees. These are all on a standard letter format as well. We are trying to take that pain of the filing. The great thing is that there is one place where it is all held. It's all cloud, it's not desktop driven, which is great. Everything is based on Google

Apps (calendars, mails). We moved to Google Apps 2.5 years ago, or 2 years ago. So we use Google Apps platform for a lot of the stuff the guys use. This also makes it more mobile friendly. They can make updates from home on their mobile device. It gives transparency to it for the agent, so they can see where they exactly are. It helped our relationship-marketing big time.

What Company D does is trying to take a pain element out of their day. Whether if it is building them a website or whether making their life easier with the CRM. We have to remember that 10 years ago agents had someone, a secretary, working in the front end to help them with all this. When the market changed, they had to let most of these people go. We spent a lot of time in 2009 to train these users on how to use our system, because they didn't know how as they hadn't touched a CRM system before. This is a very cost-effective way for them to run their business themselves. Now that market has started to scale up, they will add extra users. The system helps with the visibility across all their business. Especially when it comes to multi-branch businesses as they can see how other branches performing.

How do you measure the impact of mobile marketing with regards to relationship marketing?

Mobile marketing has made both the agents and the users' lives easier. They can now use our CRM system from home as well as the calendars, emails provided by Google Apps. We can offer them better marketing services and tools, such as mobile-optimized websites, mobile apps and QR codes.

How do you feel about the current climate? Is it harder to get buyers these days? Has mobile marketing helped you with keeping buyers and improve sales?

I think the recession has given us the opportunity to step back and prepare for the return. Eventually, we knew it would need to come back. It had to. So we had to keep building relationship with all these agents. They had very difficult times and we were there for support. I think the market has come back in certain areas. The feeling is that in urban areas for home, for family homes there is definitely a demand. There is a supply and demand issue, though. House prices have gone back up, because there too many people are looking for too few houses. The agents' goal now is to try and get more properties out. A property would normally sell within four weeks, I would imagine, most of the time in the urban areas. There is absolutely a huge

problem in rural areas, where the bottom hasn't been reached. There is a question as to what demand there is for those properties. So in the country areas, there will be an oversupply for a while, I would imagine.

We have also seen the return of investors, international investors in terms of buying. So, it is certainly a better time, as we have more enquiries, more opportunities to upsell or buy better-positioned ads. There is a market out there. We are certainly more positive than we would have been 18 months ago, 2 years ago.

Apart from mobile marketing, what other channels are you using for marketing properties? How would you rank them based on importance or priorities? How would you rank them based on sales impact?

Primary form of advertising is search (AdWords) as it is consistent. Second is paper as we are in I.T. When we go into campaigns, we use radio. The first two are a given and they are the drivers. Further opportunities are events, sponsorships, and industry events.

Search has the most sales impact. We have different search campaigns for different areas around the country. It makes it easier to sell to particular agents. So if an agent goes and searches for properties, and then see that Company D is on top, they will have the perception that Company D is very strong. We would do local radio and newspapers as well.

How do you insure that all the channels and platforms are integrated? What is the main purpose of mobile marketing? Is it fully integrated into multi-channel marketing?

We make sure everything shows the same image. We have created a new marketing template with a smaller logo presenting the same image as our app. The app has the same logo. We are quite clear as when you see something in the paper or something on the street, it is in line with what we have online and on mobile. There is a brand association. We have added extra element to our brand. So it's not just the company logo with the heart in it. It is now color-coded. It is a red heart if you are looking at rentals; it is yellow for price changes. We have taken different colors for different elements for different products and services we are doing at the moment, but the recognition is consistent. We are redesigning the app's front end. There was a feeling that it has lost a bit of brand strengths, so we need to do a little bit of work on that. And

that happens; you know what I mean. We have an app team focusing on getting the right results. Some elements we have lost along the way and we want to get those back, so users can feel they have a premium product at hand. We need to make sure it is not just a functional app; it also represents the brand. We have a put a lot of money in brand development so it is very important to us.

Overall, how has mobile marketing impacted your overall marketing strategy?

It has hugely impacted our marketing strategy. It is something that in terms of our marketing spends; it's the first. It just has to happen.

How effective do you believe your mobile marketing strategy is?

Very and we keep improving it. 18 months ago 12% of our traffic was mobile. We are now in the high 30's so it has had a significant impact on our overall business.

What is your plan for the future with regards to mobile marketing? What steps are you taking to insure competitive advantage?

We constantly trying to evolve and improve based on feedback and queries. I think the development of our mobile render site is key to it. IS there anything huge we are looking at the moment? Yes, but it is not released, yet. There is something that should be released, soon. It is now in testing and this will bring us a new audience we haven't had before.