Design for the rails to trails communication and marketing department on messagin...

Research Design for the Rails to Trails Communication and Marketing Department on messaging using the 7 Steps of the Research Process Introduction This research is aimed at exploring the current messaging techniques used by Rails to Trails Communication and Marketing Department and to provide data that will help the department come up with better messaging methods and techniques. It is hoped that the data provided will also help the department make better decisions concerning its application of messaging in the quest to venture into new markets. The results of the study will offer an invaluable insight into the department's prioritization plan, and whether it will combine messaging with other marketing techniques so as to reach a wider customer base Decision Problems/Opportunities These are the questions/dilemmas to which Rails to Trails Communication and Marketing Department requires answers so as to come up with practical and workable strategies. Just like in other researches and research designs, the decision questions posed here act as the guiding principles of this research presented in this paper. The department requires answers in order to make good decisions. What target market is Rails to Trails Marketing and Communication Department trying to reach? Has this market ever been forayed into before? If so, were the objectives achieved? How will messaging help the department achieve its marketing objectives? Is it the best option on the table? Is there a clear, concise, and focused plan on how the messaging technique will be employed? Does the department have a backup in case messaging does not do as well as expected? Is messaging a short term or long term plan? Research Objectives These are the particular data provided by the research. Often, they are determined by the type of data

required to answer the decision questions/dilemmas posed. In order to offer data that will support remedies relevant to the decision problems posed earlier, this research will concentrate on four areas: Awareness Approach Perception Alternatives Awareness: How many customers currently know about the department's products? This is the most important area of data collection in this research. As a matter of fact, the question posed above is the most crucial in the entire research process. It is imperative for data to be collected on consumers' awareness of the products the department is trying to market. Based on this data, the department can model its marketing strategy with the following objectives in mind: To ascertain how many consumers (an approximate but accurate figure should be provided) are currently aware of the department's products or services. To ascertain how the above figure can be expanded. To ascertain the localities and distribution of the consumers who are aware of the department's products and services. To ascertain how they came to know about the products and services. Approach: How will the department apply its messaging technique? Data related to this objective is meant to provide a clear strategy on how to go about the whole messaging process. This objective entails looking at other companies' application of messaging, what they did/do, their success rates, and any new developments thus far. The department will then study the approaches they are aware of and decide whether to adopt a common strategy or develop a new one based on a blending of known approaches. Questions will include: What are the common approaches to messaging? Have these approaches been successful? If so, to what extent? Are there any new developments the department is not aware of but should know about? Is

it best to settle on a known approach, or customize one based on the target market? Perception: Are people willing to pay for the department's products and services? If so, what do they think about their experience thus far? Data concerning this objective must be accurate in order to give the department a good perspective of the performance of their products and services up to this point. If the current customers are dissatisfied then potential consumers are likely to be halfhearted towards the department's products and services. A holistic approach should be conceived so as to retain current consumers and acquire more based on the data collected. Questions will include: What do current consumers think about the department's products and services? Based on the answer to the above question, how should the department align its messaging strategy? Based on the answer to the above question, can new customers be brought on board and current ones retained? Alternatives: Is there a backup plan should messaging fails to meet expectations? Data should be collected on the available alternative options because there is never a 100% guarantee that a plan will be successful. Possible alternatives should be developed alongside messaging so that they can be rolled out in the shortest time possible. Questions will include" What alternatives are available? Can they support the messaging strategy in case it fails? Are such alternatives ready to be implemented anytime or still in progress? Previous Studies The Rails to Trails Communication and Marketing Department has previously carried out research related to its products and services, as well as the effectiveness of its marketing strategies. In addition to this, other studies have revealed that if well-planned and executed, messaging can be one of the most effective marketing strategies. According

to research by Falls & Decker (22), messaging can have not less than a 90% success rate if well-planned and executed. Results of studies conducted by Wertime & Fenwick (16) also show that messaging always presents an ideal opportunity to reach a wider customer base, as well as consolidate gains made in new markets. According to Weigelt & Boehman (47), messaging is a cost-effective and reliable marketing strategy that can yield positive results for both small and large organizations. Hart, Greenfield, & Johnston (31) provide a compelling argument for messaging by stating that it measures up to other more expensive and time-consuming strategies if well implemented. According to Schultz & Doerr (53), research studies since 1983 have revealed that only inexperienced marketers tend to ignore simple and sufficiently effective strategies like messaging and rush to expensive and time-consuming techniques in the hope of getting instant success. Methods Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used in this research. Four videotaped focus groups will be carried out. Participants will be 1, 000 randomly selected people. The results will be provided to Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department both as a top-line report and a DVD. Quantitative research will be carried out through online surveys, interviews, mailed questionnaires, and telephone surveys. Interviews, surveys, and questionnaires will be conducted among 500 randomly selected individuals. Online surveys will be done using Survey Monkey based on a sample provided by Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department. Schedule May 24th: Defining decision problems and specifying research objectives. June 5th: Focus Group 1 and Focus Group 2 June 10th: Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department will be presented

with a top line report and the DVD. June 28: Phone surveys will be conducted with consultation of Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department, and based on a sample of 500 randomly selected individuals. June 30th - July 14th: Web questionnaire will be developed in conjunction with Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department. July 20th: Content analysis of Rails and Trails Communication and Marketing Department in the media will be conducted. July 30th: Web survey test August 1st – August 15th: Online survey carried out on Survey Monkey August 20th – August 24th: SPSS analysis of the data obtained from Survey Monkey. August 25th – August 30th: Written and oral presentation of the research results. Works Cited Falls, Jason, & Erik Deckers. No bullshit social media: the all-business, no-hype guide to social media marketing. Indianapolis, Ind.: Que, 2012. Print. Hart, Ted, James M. Greenfield, & Michael W. Johnston. Nonprofit internet strategies best practices for marketing, communications, and fundraising success. Hoboken, N. J.: Wiley, 2005. Print. Schultz, Mike, & John E. Doerr. Professional services marketing: how the best firms build premier brands, thriving lead generation engines, and cultures of business development success. Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2009. Print. Weigelt, David, & Jonathan Boehman. Dot boom: marketing to baby boomers through meaningful online engagement. Great Falls, VA: LINX, 2009. Print. Wertime, Kent, & Ian Fenwick. DigiMarketing: the essential guide to new media & digital marketing. Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asia), 2008. Print.