Sporting Organisations: Do they need to communicate with members?

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Abstract

Communication is an important element in devising, disseminating and pursuing the organisational goals for all organisations. It involves informing target audiences about frequent, timely and relevant information. Members were consulted with regard their particular needs; as well as staff who are responsive, knowledgeable and passionate about the organisation. Being very different target groups, we found communication approaches wanted by both groups to differ. We surveyed Australian sporting organisations aiming to examine their communication strategies. Not surprisingly, our findings suggest that many organisations think of communication as an after-thought. We argue that sporting organisations are not making the most the latest communication methods, nor progressing with member's communication desires or what members are actually seeking. Members want electronic, two-way and fast communication tools including electronic newsletter and bulletin boards. This research opens up debate on how community-based media may value-add to the organisational communication mix, and how digital broadcasting can be developed by the community broadcasting sector to enhance the communications capabilities for the not for profit sector.

Introduction

The last ten years have seen a remarkable growth in communications technology and convergence, noticeably the Internet, online communities and mobile phones. In addition, the state of continual change and economic pressures mean that all organisations need to keep up with the latest communication trends that are emerging because the communication process of creating and reflecting new structures, processes and relationships is changing (Hamelink, 2004; Jones et al, 2004; Quay, 1998). The changes in electronic formats of recent times such as blogging, VOIP and wireless networks promotes the trend towards deregulated environments as well as reinforces the trend towards globalization (Hamelink, 2004). Nevertheless, are all organisations able to adopt these communication trends, more importantly Third Sector Not For Profits (NFPs), specifically sporting organisations, have the resources to utilize the advancements in technology and communication effectively? And do these organisations need to?

Sporting organisations operate in a highly competitive environment, particularly as the number of sporting organisations has increased which has resulted in higher competition to gain the limited amount of funds available through sponsorship, government grants or member funds. This competitive environment can be based on the very nature of sport but many sporting organisations compete against each other for members, participants and spectators. Many sporting organisations need to rely on strong communication with their key stakeholders which are mostly their members or participants (Lyons 2001). To survive and prosper within this environment, key issues relating to communication may hold the key to gain future success. The integration of new services has been identified as important requirements for end-users (Varshney et al. 2002; Zubey et al. 2002).

This study investigates how the communication trends affect sporting organisations, whether they are able to adopt these changes while using them effectively and lastly whether members of sporting organisations are wishing to take advantage of these

changes in their communication. In this research, we are concentrating on digital communication as this will have the main communication impact on sporting organisations' members in the future. This study concentrated on sporting organisations within Australia and their ability to effectively integrate the communication tools available to them. In addition, investigations on members of Equestrian Queensland (EQ) were conducted as well as their willingness to effectively integrate the communication tools available to them. Strategies are suggested that may help improve communication between the sporting organisations and their key stakeholders: their members. Our research question specifically explores: *Communication trends in sporting organisations.* Furthermore, this paper will argue that sporting organisations are not making the most the latest communication methods which their members are actually seeking.

This paper reports on the findings of the research that relates specifically to the relationships that exist between sporting organisations and communication. Specifically within this paper, relevant literature is reviewed regarding sporting organisations customer orientation, new technology growth and digitisation including Internet and mobile phones. The ever changing marketplace is the explored with regard to communication and deregulation of sporting organisations.

Are sporting organisations customer focused?
Even though sporting organisations think of themselves as customer-focused, often it is a desire rather than reality. Andreason and Kotler (2002) found that Not for Profits were organisational-centered rather than possessing a customer orientation and that they exhibited all the characteristics of an inward-focused institution. The majority of sporting organisations are Not for Profit Organisations, staffed by the majority of volunteers (Lyons and Hocking 2000). Within sport, recreation and social third sector clubs, growth is non-existent and many are 'doing it tough' (Lyons 2001, p. 218), therefore this information would be applicable.

Furthermore, the for-profit sector has grown remarkably over the past twenty years (Lyons 2001), however many organisations can be unresponsive to their clients (Newman and Wallender 1976; Andreasen 1982; Moyer 1994; Bruce 1995). The for-profit sector organisations do not want members, however NFPs do. NFPs members can and do make unique and important contributions. Given that integrated marketing communication needs to be client focused, this lack of customer focus understandably causes problems for their members.

Creative and visionary sporting organisations must continuously strive to meet the needs of the communities that they serve (Holohena 2002), which means developing more humanistic member relationships (Jenkinson 2000; Pech and Slade 2004). Therefore, marketing communication should not exist in isolation. When it comes to organisational communication, effectiveness and integration between all communication tools is important (Eagle and Kitchen 2000; Duncan 2005). An IMC program requires that more than one communication type is used with degrees of consistency and harmony that reflect the existence and content of the other communication options (Keller 2001). By enhancing efficient media selection, this will aid cost and reach as well as communication effectiveness (Billett 2002; Jenkinson and Sain 2004). This is because the features of integrated marketing tools, consistent messages, target segments and two-way communication are able to achieve the purpose of effective promotion and enhance

brand value. Utilising multiple media channels can add communication power through existing synergies (Billett 2002).

Searching for new communication tools that increase speed, productivity and convenience has become imperative for the harried members. Further, organisations require communication to be quick and easy to fit into their busy lifestyles (Muehrcke 1999).

Over A$7 billion was spent by households on sport, and A$300 million by companies in annual sponsorships, A$430 million in annual exports, and sport in Australia is worth 1 percent of GDP (Australian Sports Commission, 2006). Therefore, sporting organisations in Australia have a major impact on industry and communities, but can sporting organisations which are mostly NFP organisations accept the growth in new technologies and digitisation?

The growth of new technologies and digitisation
Through communication, people establish common meaning (Duncan 2005). Communication has changed, and these changes are having a major impact on the way sporting organisations communicate with their members. The three common applications are one-voice, integration and co-ordinated marketing communication. Organisations have had to change because of the changes in technology (Greif & Millen, 2003; Kitchen & Schultz, 1999).

Digitisation means that the integration of communication networks not only spreads ideas and concepts around the world, but can lead to speed, flexibility, reliability and lower costs which then benefit the members. These communication networks and methods such as Internet, but also with VOIP, Blogs, SnapMail, Skype, TAGS, podcasts and SMS have vastly changed over the past ten years. However, only a few of these advancements are actually used by sporting organisations in communication with members (Hamelink, 2004; Ezell, 1989).

The inexorable rise of 'web 2.0' is creating opportunities in safeguarding or building brands and corporate reputation. The explosion of Blogs, online communities and other forms of user-generated content is influencing communication and Public Relation strategies for all organisations not just sporting ones (Gray, 2006).

Technology in many of our products is part of our everyday life. Integrated products, such as mobile phones that combine digital cameras, portable audio systems provide new applications for consumers. Technology has allowed company's to gain competitive advantage (Geissler and Edison 2005), while also allowing an extensive choice of entertainment. This has created two generations who have mostly short attention spans (Bartlett 2004).

Young people consume the most media of all market segments, and are therefore 'the easiest to reach' (Duncan 2005). However, Generation X and Y are not one group, but many sub-groups. They are the most connected generations thanks to new communication technologies including mobile phones, the Internet and their technological knowledge (Bartlett 2004). With 9 out of every 10 16-28 year old owning a mobile phone, connection and communication are the key factors (Canning 2003). Because most are media junkies, they may not be the easiest to reach. If they use such a

diverse range of media and are media savvy, knowledge of the micro-target audience is essential.

The internet.

Sporting organisations are facing a wave of change with technological advancements, globalisation and new regulations (D'Aveni, 1994). The internet has changed communication. Media habits of consumers have become more discerning, and multitasking ie using two or more media at once is on the rise.

The internet is one way for sporting organisations to communicate efficiently with their targets, especially the younger generation. What will the next five years bring? Generation Y will be the main target. Sporting organisations can tap into new niche audiences via new technology. The use of the internet has created electronic global communities as the physical boundaries have been eliminated and electronic access assists in overcoming traditional barriers of time, place and even membership (Quay, 1998).

The adoption of the internet has been the fastest growing among children and teens and they have embraced it more than their parents (CyberAtlas 1999; Hedberg and Bedwell 2000). Youth know how to navigate around pop-ups, email, search for information and purchase (Lenhart, Rainie et al. 2001). They communicate with speed and most possess short attention spans (Bartlett 2004), preferring the Internet over other media for data collection and transactions (CyberAtlas 2000).

The internet is the single most important media to Generation Y because there are over 26.6 million persons online between the ages of 12 and 24 (NetRatings' August 2003 Audience Profile Report). This is 57 percent of the 47 million in the United States that make up this group. This generation currently accounts for more than $149 billion dollars on an annualized basis, with some 15 percent of those dollars being spent online (NetRatings 2003).

Although interactivity is not new, it is a far more sophisticated phenomenon which may consist of personal, machine and database interaction (Van Raaij 1998). Personal interactivity can include personal advice and selling. The internet allows for database maintenance allowing collection of personal information. This in turn allows better and more improved communication to add value to the consumer, as the site knows who they are, and what their preferences are. A music site, pandora.com does just this. Through database manipulation of the customer's preferences, music that the customer likes is stored. Music that is not liked is also stored with the click of a button, which instantly changes what is being played on the site. The user can store music in their 'favourites', create a radio station, or download and purchase music. The wonderful aspect of databases for the youth market is the personalization that it can provide for products and services. It saves time, which is important to them.

The other aspect that is important for our youth audience is that the internet provides newsrooms, chat rooms and blogs. These services are very important to this group, allowing information sharing, suggestions from other members and solutions given to product or services on offer. The information must be up-to-date and relevant to the group in question. However, many websites do not keep up-to-date or change their format for their target audience, which is so important for a youth audience. Hard sell is something of the past, with layering of marketing communication a trend for the future

to attract this lucrative market. For example, the Zero Coke site has been very calculating in their approach. Marketing communications in traditional channels push website traffic.

This century has seen the market place dominated by what customers' want, when they want it and how they want the products, services and messages delivered. No longer are we seeing many marketers push messages. We see the pull side of things working in layers to attract a savvier group of younger and smarter consumers. The consumer has been driving the 21st Century marketplace for some years where they decide who and what brands they want relationships with, and what is of value to them. Marketing communication has to change from their historical perspective and 'get with the program' if brands want to reach the youth market.

The future will see a heavy focus on technology and new forms of communication, namely the Internet and SMS, both of which sporting organisations have to be aware (Meuter, Ostrom et al. 2003) nor have they previously been used (Hamelink, 2004). A previous study conducted in 2000 and repeated in 2001 (nfpSynergy, 2006) found that the use of the Internet was in its infancy within Not For Profits. Among its findings were that the most popular Internet applications were news and information, regular updates and email enquiry services.

Mobile telephones

No prior research exists on the usage of marketing by mobile telephones for sporting organisations (Saxton 2001). It is clear that this practice is taking place, and has substantial scope for future research by NFP organisations as these devices are carried by us at all times. With over 19.1 million handsets owned in Australia, the mobile phone industry has the capacity to alter future marketing.

Mobile telephones developments have brought about mobile instant messaging and mobile blogging which allows one person on the move to communicate instantly their thoughts to many. These communications tools have allowed choice on how people communicate with each other. Text will be the most likely for a quick chat, Instant Messaging (IM) for a group, mobile emails for more detailed information and professional engagement and blogging could be for a wider audience (Griffiths, 2006). The current introduction of the HSDPA networks that can handle the data speed requirements of video and other more data hungry applications this uptake will grow rapidly.

The new iPhone is all but on the shelf. Mobile phone advertisers and research has been slow to explore the effectiveness and acceptance for using this medium for advertising (Merisavo, Kajalo et al. 2008). With only 160 character text-only formats being a major disadvantage, MMS (multi-media messages) can deliver pictures and video clips. Both of these can have positive effects on building consumer brand relationships (Nysveen, Pedersen et al. 2005).

Despite the increase in mobile phone messages: both SMS and MMS, there is still much room to gain connectivity with audiences and growing advertising mobile services including news, sport, ringtones and graphics (Merisavo, Vesanen et al. 2006). The younger generation are mad about SMS and MMS and many people are addicted to their phones (Park 2005) and cannot function without them. They are not only a fashion statement (Katz and Sugiyami 2005) but are often linked to personality .

Blogs

Blogging is all about internal and external communications and two-way conversation by introducing more informal, interactive approaches that increase the power of customers and employees which is what they are seeking in today's society. Blogs may have started out as the domain of technology enthusiasts and consumer pressure groups, but they are now becoming a vital communications tool. The way in which consumers use the web has shifted over the past few years from simple browsing to generating their own content which gives blogging a key role in online communication. Blogging enables faster feedback and a more strategic understanding of where consumers are heading, but blogging also demonstrates to customers that the company cares about them. (Brooks, 2006; DeFelice, 2006; Gray, 2006; Anonymous, 2005).

Miller (2006) stated that 'Millennials' who are those born between 1980 and 2000, otherwise known as Generation Y, don't read newspapers as they like technology and consuming and that all companies based on this generation should be doing something about the blogesphere.

Roughly 50 million US internet users visited blog sites in the first quarter of 2005. 30 percent of all US Internet Users and one in six of the total of the US population visit blogs. (Miller, 2006). No organisation can ignore these statistics, especially when their core focus is communicating with their members.

Internet telephony (IP telephony)

The recent growth of this area has lead researchers to concentrate on end-user requirements. Key attributes including service quality, reliability, price, security, equipment cost and values adding with new services have been identified as important requirements for end-users (Varshney et al. 2002). Further, the most important was integration of new services including call waiting caller ID, unified messaging, accessibility and price (Zubey et al. 2002). A more recent study by Tseng and Yu (2005) investigated challenges of service quality of IP telephony.

The 21st century marketplace shifted the balance of power, and technological development has taken society away from the Industrial Age and moved to the Information Revolution (Schultz 1996). Consumers have become more educated and experienced than ever before and are not satisfied by marketing campaigns that use persuasion based, one-way communication models (Geissler 2001). This change brings with it major impacts on corporate communication (Schultz and Kitchen 2004). The traditional model of top down, one way communication does not exist in today's society. It has been transformed by globalisation, digitisation and social change (Edelman, 2004).

Community

Today's youth are motivated by the need for community and self expression. Technology including the Internet, mobile phones and the availability of digital music has allowed for the growth of the global community. Well built communities are created with underpinnings of factors related to members and implementation of how well needs are shared and fulfilled from an emotional perspective. Social networks allow users to interact, chat, keep in touch, re-acquaint, meet and share music, videos and photos. They also connect people for very little cost (Goetz and Barger 2008). While few studies investigate the antecedents of adopting a specific site (Gangadharbatla 2008), industry surveys show social media enables communication and relationships to develop with others with whom we share beliefs, interests, values or similar experiences despite,

geographic, socio-economic, cultural or other communication limitations that would have prevented or decreased the likelihood of such relationships in the past.

In January this year, market share ranked by percentage share of visits within Australia were as follows: MySpace 44%, Facebook 3, Bebo 8.7 and Orkut 2 percent. Whereas in New Zealand Bebo topped the Hitwise rankings with 41%, Facebook second with 35 and MySpace 8.6 percent (Source: Hitwise, 2008). Myspace has over 181 million worldwide users, Bebo has 2.4 million users (Source: Hitwise). However, the new phenomena Facebook is overtaking, with an increase in growth by 826% in the six months to May 2007 (Source: Neilsen Australia).

Those within a person's social circle or sub-culture influence behaviour (Howard and Sheth 1969). Communities are about sharing ideas on any topic on which the group is focused on (Forrest 1999). People discuss what sites they shop at, best homepages, which have the best deals and offer the best service. They satisfy both social and economic goals (Rheingold 1993; Wind and Mahajan 2002). Strong communities can be formed because strong word of mouth online adds differential value because of the offer of greater amounts of information about product ranges (Haubl and Trifts 1999; Lynch and Ariely 2000). Further, more people participate in virtual communities than to make online purchases (Horrigan 2001), as blogging has grown in usage by today's youth.

Discovering what products are 'out there' and where they are available is fun (Novak, Hoffman et al. 2000). Newsgroups offer an exchange of information, and play an important role as they link an individual's hobbies with like-minded persons. These links are a way of associating people by allowing the interaction through the web. Hobbies could include products and services, and are varied within the youth demographic. People like to chat with others about their interests (Tauber 1972), where they can meet and communicate with others, stimulating each other's needs and sharing evaluations. Online chat rooms can be a meeting place.

Multitasking and media meshing

Multitasking is a popular and seemingly essential habit of doing more than one thing at a time. It is much more common and vital these days, partly because of technology. We'd have more time on our hands if we didn't have to read our e-mail, surf the Internet, return phone calls, text, go to the movies, read the gig guide, study, and watch television. Globally, the latest Generation finds itself on a daily basis faced with more tasks than time to accomplish them, and as a result have become highly proficient at multi-tasking and 'media meshing'. Media meshing is a behavioural trend that occurs when people begin experiencing one medium, for example watching television, then shift to another, such as using the Internet, and maybe even a third, like listening to music, and even a fourth texting their friends. The explanation for this behaviour is the constant search for complementary information, different perspectives and even emotional fulfilment.

A recent study revealed that sixty percent of 13 to 24 year-olds in 11 countries prefer the Internet for music, compared to 20 percent who prefer radio (OMD 2005). The report found that this generation often consumes multiple media formats at the same time and that traditional media are often pushed to 'background' in the 'media-meshing' hierarchy. A key finding from this study is that this generation can fit up to 44 hours of activities in just one day. In 2007, an Australian study found that youth consumed around 32 hours of media per day (Luck and Klaehn 2007). They have the ability to simultaneously use multiple technologies, which allows them to potentially increase their media consumption

during their average waking hour day. Young people living in Australia, UK, Germany and Mexico perform the highest number of other activities while surfing the Internet. More recently, Australians were spending 84.4 hours per week across a range of media and leisure activities (Nielsen/NetRatings 2008).

Methodology of our research
The research for this paper was conducted in two parts. Part one was a survey of sporting organisations and part two was a survey of members of a sporting organisation.

The first survey was to determine if sporting organisations were communicating with their stakeholders abd by what means. A 21 question survey was administered via an email invitation asking respondents to visit an electronic survey on a website. We sent emails to the sporting organisations listed on the websites of The Australian Sports Commissions, Sport and Recreation Queensland and Equestrian Queensland. There were 80 National Sporting Organisations listed on the Australian Sporting Commissions website, 120 State Sporting Organisations listed on Sport and Recreation Queensland and 75 Equestrian clubs. The Queensland State Sporting Organisations and Equestrian Clubs were used for convenience and accessibility. We received 90 respondents within a mixture of National and Sporting Organisations. The level of sporting organisation was represented by 42 from Queensland, 13 at a Club level and 25 from a National sporting organisation and ten did not indicate their level of sporting structure. Tasmania, South Australia and Northern Territory were not included as no responses were received from these States.

The second survey was in order to determine how members wish to be communicated to by sporting organisations. A survey was administered via an email invitation asking members of EQ to visit an electronic survey on a website. This was sent to 1814 email addresses, with a reminder email also being sent to those email addresses. Of the 1814 e-mail addresses used, 200 messages returned a fail message, providing a total working address list of 1614 candidates. Further responses were sourced through links to the survey being available on the EQ website (www.qld.equestrian.org.au), DressageIT (www.dressageit.com), and online horse interest news site Cyberhorse (www.cyberhorse.com.au). The members of EQ were used for convenience and accessibility. We received 324 respondents.

Both questionnaires generated both qualitative and quantitative responses in order to gauge a more valid indication of the organisation and their communication methods. The first section of both questionnaires asked about communication methods and awareness of these methods by the organisation and the member respectively. Section two explored the demographic details of the organisation ie whether they were National, State or local clubs as well as the demographic information on their members.

Findings
Of the 90 sporting organisation responses, sixty two percent believed that it was "important" to "very important" to keep up to date in advances in communication technologies when asked "How important to your organisation is keeping up to date in advances in communication technologies?"

Within the Club, State and National level, we wanted to explore whether staff were appointed to look after communication. All sporting organisations from the varying levels indicated that in the majority of cases no specific person was appointed to look

after communication. Interestingly, local Clubs were more likely to have someone looking after communication (38.5 percent), compared to national (24.0 percent) and state level (33.3 percent). Statistically, no significant differences exist between organisation levels on whether they have an employee to solely look after communication χ^2 (2, N = 80) = 1.011, p = .603.

Furthermore, there were no significant differences between organisation level and whether they thought they would need to hire another staff member to integrate new technologies χ^2 (2, N = 80) = 1.689, p = .43. It appears that organisations at a Club level are less likely to believe they could afford to implement new communication methods χ^2 (2, N = 80) = 7.527, p = .023. National and State level organisations believed that they could afford to implement new communication methods, with 64 percent respectively.

Findings indicated that 48.9 percent of respondents felt that advancements in communication technologies would make it less time consuming to communicate with members. In addition, 71 percent thought it would make things more efficient to communicate with members. Furthermore, 63.8 percent of respondents used electronic newsletters to send to members, although the majority of Club level organisations did not use electronic newsletters (53.8%). There were no significant differences between organisational levels use of electronic newsletters χ^2 (2, N = 80) = 4.231, p = .121.

In addition, these findings could have a direct link to only 46.2% of Club level organisations not having a website, compared to all State and National organisations having a website. Club level organisations are significantly less likely to have websites than state and national organisations. χ^2 (2, N = 80) = 33.43, p < .0001.

Sporting organisations stated that updating websites is important, however at a Club level, only 66.7% update their websites every now and then. Daily updates are undertaken by 40% of National and 14.3% of State organisations; with 40% and 54.7% updating every couple of days to weekly respectively.

What communication methods are being utilised by sporting organisations?
Respondents were asked to list all of the communication methods they used, and respondents were encouraged to list as many as they could, therefore percentages in the following table do not add to 100. The most popular communication methods at the club level were email (69.2%) and telephone (46.2%). At the State level, the most popular methods were email (81%), letters, newsletters and website (47.6% each). Full results can be viewed in Table 1 below.

Next we asked respondents if they had heard of SKYPE, VOIP, and blogs to gauge awareness of some of the technological communication advancements. Among those who had heard of blogs, respondents who had heard of SKYPE were more likely to have heard of VOIP, χ^2 (1, N = 34) = 14.25, p < .0001. Among those who hadn't heard of blogs, respondents who hadn't heard of SKYPE were also less likely to have heard of VOIP, although there was no difference amongst those who had heard of SKYPE in awareness of VOIP.

Table 1: Communication methods by Club, State and National levels

	Club		State		National	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
Email	9	69.2	34	81.0	20	80.0
Fax	0	-	3	7.1	3	12.0
Letters / hard copy / mail / post	4	30.8	20	47.6	8	32.0
Magazine	0	-	4	9.5	2	8.0
Meetings / face to face	3	23.1	8	19.0	5	20.0
Newsletter	4	30.8	20	47.6	3	12.0
Online / electronic / email newsletter	0	-	9	21.4	5	20.0
SMS	0	-	1	2.4	0	-
Telephone	6	46.2	13	31.0	8	32.0
Website	2	15.4	20	47.6	15	60.0
Word of mouth	0	-	2	4.8	0	-
Other (not stated what other is)	2	15.4	2	4.8	4	16.0
Total	**13**	**100**	**42**	**100**	**25**	**100**

Source: developed for this research

Unprompted responses listed any new communication technologies that organisations were aware of. We explored the data at a State level and when unprompted respondents indicated that SMS was the most popular communication technology in the ACT and Queensland. However, Victorian respondents were more aware of web-based communication (see Table 2). The results show bias towards Queensland due to the Queensland State Sporting Organisations and Queensland Clubs being targeted in the invitation to participate due to the accessibility and convenience of the Queensland sample.

Table 2: Unprompted communication technologies by State

	ACT		NSW		QLD		VIC		WA	
	Freq	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**	**Freq**	**%**
3G	0	-	0	-	1	1.7	1	20.0	0	-
Blogging	0	-	0	-	2	3.3	0	-	0	-
Email	0	-	0	-	7	11.7	0	-	0	-
Fax	0	-	0	-	2	3.3	0	-	0	-
MSN messenger	0	-	0	-	2	3.3	0	-	0	-
Podcasting/ iPod technology	0	-	0	-	2	3.3	0	-	0	-
Skype	1	25.0	1	16.7	1	1.7	0	-	1	50.0
SMS	2	50.0	0	-	9	15.0	0	-	0	-
Telephone	0	-	0	-	2	3.3	0	-	0	-
Video conferencing	0	-	1	16.7	1	1.7	1	20.0	0	-
VOIP	2	50.0	1	16.7	6	10.0	0	-	0	-
WAP/ other mobile phone technology	2	50.0	0	-	6	10.0	0	-	0	-
Web	0	-	1	16.7	6	10.0	1	20.0	0	-
Wireless broadband	0	-	0	-	3	5.0	1	20.0	0	-
Other	0	-	0	-	3	5.0	0	-	0	-
Don't know/ not sure/ none	1	25.0	4	66.7	25	41.7	2	40.0	1	50.0
Total	**4**	**100**	**6**	**100**	**60**	**100**	**5**	**100**	**2**	**100**

Source: developed for this research

What members want

Findings indicated that 49 percent of member respondents felt that advancements in communication technologies would make it less time consuming to communicate with EQ and 51 percent thought it would make things more efficient to communicate with Equestrian Queensland. Furthermore, 91.3 percent of respondents wanted electronic newsletters to be sent to them. However, there was no significant differences between demographic details on the use of electronic newsletters (gender: $p=.775$, age $p=.199$, income $p=.146$ and region $p=.467$).

Member respondents with an income of less than \$10,000 are significantly more likely to be interested in communicating with EQ via msn messenger $p=.045$ while students are also significantly more likely to be interested in communicating with EQ via msn messenger $p=.020$ and SMS $p=.004$. Respondents aged 15 to 24 are significantly more interested in communicating with EQ via SMS, while aged 55 and over are significantly less interested in SMS communication $p=.015$. It could be concluded these are related and make up the Generation Y factor.

Respondents were significantly more likely to believe that that EQ should have a Blog if they had heard of Blogs $p=.0001$, if they were in the lowest income group (less than \$10,000) $p=.019$ and from non-regional areas $p=.043$. Again, this could be related to Generation Y and the members' accessibility to the sport and to computers. In addition, female respondents were significantly more likely to agree that EQ should have a bulletin board on their website $p=.005$

What communication methods do members want?

Member respondents were asked to list the main communication methods they would like EQ to communicate with them. As Tables 3-5 indicate, the most popular communication method was Email by gender (female 68.4 percent and 66.2 percent for males), remoteness (regional 66.7 percent and 67.0 percent) and age.

Table 3: Communication methods by Gender

	MALE		FEMALE	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Email, electronic	13	68.4	149	66.2
Mail, hard copy, newsletter	7	36.8	72	32.0
Internet, website, online	3	15.8	27	12.0
Publications, magazines	0	0	11	4.9
Telephone	3	15.8	7	3.1
Total	**19**	**100**	**225**	**100**

Source: developed for this research

Table 4: Communication methods by Remoteness

	REGIONAL		NON-REGIONAL	
	Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Email, electronic	88	66.7	75	67.0
Mail, hard copy, newsletter	48	36.4	31	27.7
Internet, website, online	13	9.8	17	15.2
Publications, magazines	3	2.3	8	7.1
Telephone	8	6.1	2	1.8
Total	**132**	**100**	**112**	**100**

Source: developed for this research

Table 5: Communication methods by Age

	10-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74
Email, electronic	4 / 66.7	29 / 64.4	23 / 63.9	41 / 70.7	36 / 66.7	8 / 66.7	4 / 80.0
Mail, hard copy, newsletter	2 / 33.3	15 / 33.3	12 / 33.3	17 / 29.3	18 / 33.3	4 / 33.3	3 / 60.0
Internet, website, online	0 / 0	9 / 20.0	2 / 5.6	8 / 13.8	5 / 9.3	0 / 0	0 / 0
Publications, magazines	0 / 0	1 / 2.2	2 / 5.6	4 / 6.9	2 / 3.7	0 / 0	0 / 0
Telephone	0 / 0	4 / 8.9	3 / 8.3	2 / 3.4	1 / 1.9	0 / 0	0 / 0
Total	**6**	**45**	**36**	**58**	**54**	**12**	**5**

Source: developed for this research

Implications

This paper has outlined problems associated with communication trend of digitisation effecting sporting organisations, specifically sporting organisations within Australia. It is clear from our research that sporting organisations are unable or unwilling to adapt to new communication technologies mainly due to limited resources. This paper has also identified the communication that members wish to use. It is clear from our research that members, specifically Generation Y, are more adept in adapting to using new communication technologies. This indicates that that many challenges remain for sporting organisations. Evidence from our research suggests that new technology has brought about a need for new marketing communication strategies to be implemented.

As evidence from this research shows, the majority of sporting organisations feel that it is important for them to keep up to date with communication advances. However, our results indicate that it is not being undertaken. Success will be found by thinking smarter, as budgets do not allow media spend success; knowledge of new technologies; clear and creative messages; micro-targeting; and strong alliances to create value communication.

The potential and opportunity that exists for sporting organisations is staggering because the rest of the world which has been growing with new technologies. Sporting organisations are failing to make the most of the power of new technologies to communicate with their stakeholders. Therefore we can hope that sporting organisations become more proactive and take these findings to the core of the organisation and change marketing communication strategies.

Our research demonstrates that a combination of factors affect this market. It is not enough just to have the technology but to ensure that the content is available and relevant whether it is a phone or a PSP. The television style of maintaining interest will be applied to new media and will create many new opportunities for marketers. Most companies are not configured for providing customers with an integrated brand experience (Rangaswamy and Van Bruggen 2005), but will need to in the future to reach the youth of today. Organisations must invest time and resources in multi-channeled systems and those who offer integrated cross-channel service are those who will have success with this target group. Even a simple SMS method driving traffic to a website, followed by an email can be an effective cross-channel strategy. Importantly, consistency of messages is the key to producing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Rangaswamy and Van Bruggen 2005).

In addition, our findings indicate at a Club level many do not have a website, and therefore do not utilize electronic newsletters to communicate with members. This could have large implications on costs and time of current staff or volunteers and even members themselves.

Furthermore, collaboration has become essential for sporting organisations so that they can cut costs and leverage on their communication. In doing so, searching for new communication tools and software that increases speed, productivity and convenience has become imperative for harried members as they require communication to be quick and easy to fit into their lifestyles (Muehrcke 1999). More research is required, not only in sporting organisations but in all organisations and their uptake of new communication methods in general. A study that includes a broader range of sporting organisations could determine stronger and more valid results. It is also evident that further research that explores uses of broadcast media by sporting organisations as well as one-to-one and asynchronous media is essential.

Conclusions and future research
The development of new communications technology has brought with it a range of communications channels which require specific planning. We believe that the future will see a heavy focus on technology and new forms of communications, namely the Internet and SMS which sporting organisations have to be aware of (Meuter, Ostrom et al. 2003) nor have they previously been used (Hamelink, 2004). Nonetheless, one of the key benefits of Internet and SMS marketing is the ability to enable stakeholders to market on behalf of the organisation. Viral marketing is one strategy that sporting organisations could use to their benefit that is being underutilised. Marketing communicators will be required to become more advanced and develop stylish and classy ways to persuade people to invest or visit their website or follow their cause.

Most importantly for the growth of communications for many sporting organisations over the next decade will need to incorporate value adding and further partnerships with community broadcasting sectors, as these platforms could enhance the communications capabilities of sporting organisations even further. Will communication strategies be similar or different between sporting organisations and commercial communication?

Interactivity has a large impact on corporate organisations. Connecting with members and staff through intranets, extranets and other electronic systems is important. Within sporting organisations, these systems appear to be evolving on an on-going basis. In the 21st century, communication is most important, and inherent is the need to develop relevant communication methods that have impact.

Use of technology has trebled within the past five years, and within the ever–changing marketplace, sporting organisations cannot afford to lag behind. Embedded with electronic channel usage is the potential to reshape internal communication. In order to accommodate changing environmental conditions relating to the technological environment, sporting organisations must lead the way with communication.

Searching for new communication tools and software that increases speed, productivity, convenience and cuts costs has become imperative for the harried members as they require the communication to be quick and easy to fit into their lifestyles (Muehrcke 1999). For all of the benefits that new technologies can provide sporting organisations, many are still not transforming these capabilities (Gordon 1998; Burt and Taylor 1999).

In order for sporting organisations to become more member focused towards a younger, savvier Generation, the use of these marketing communication tools must be explored. It is suggested that more research needs to be undertaken regarding Generation Y and their uptake on communication trends. In addition, what impact these trends have to those located regionally and whether they are able to utilise these methods effectively.

This paper has focused on sporting organisations, but the findings and conclusions would also be applicable for Not for Profit organisations that have to communicate with their members and stakeholders. With only one percent of Not for Profits budget being spent on communication, there is huge scope for proactive communication to commence (Fernsler 2006).

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