



A digital marketing framework for sport organisations in South Africa

HJ Degenaar



orcid.org 0000-0001-7569-2660

Thesis accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Communication at the North-West
University

Promoter: Prof L Holtzhausen
Co-promoter: Prof LM Fourie

Graduation: July 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all the people who, through their support and encouragement, helped to ensure the completion of this study, thank you. In particular, I would like to mention the following people who proved to be invaluable to me throughout the study:

My promotor and co-promotor, Prof Lida Holtzhausen and Prof Lynnette Fourie, for the time spent with me, offering insights, guidance and, most of all, encouragement and motivation throughout the research process. Thank you for your time, willingness and expert advice.

My family, especially my wife Anette and two children, Anja, and Phillip, who supported and believed in me and encouraged me to complete the study.

My colleagues at the office, especially Jean Stidworthy and Piet Steyn, for your encouragement and understanding when I needed time off from work to complete the study.

Prof Suria Ellis from the Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University's Potchefstroom campus for her guidance and assistance in analysing the results of the quantitative questionnaire.

Mrs Michelle Coetzee for language editing my thesis and for the advice given.

Ms Anneke Coetzee, who reviewed the bibliography and offered her support with academic research.

Ms Petra Gainsford, who aided in quality control with the NWU template.

My heavenly Father, who gave me the strength and perseverance I needed to finish the study.

ABSTRACT

Sport has become a major industry in South Africa and sport organisations are continuously trying to obtain a competitive advantage. Sport has a distinctive quality due to its inherent unpredictability. Sporting events have the ability to change the emotions, level of excitement, and level of involvement of spectators, depending upon the outcome of a particular event or game. Sport stakeholders transcend the role of mere customers, as they possess a deep emotional connection with and genuine concern for their teams and athletes. They desire a deep and interactive involvement with their sport team. Sport, thus being inherently social, not only promotes but also flourishes through the establishment of communities and active involvement. Both face-to-face and virtual interactions are essential for cultivating a sense of community among stakeholders with a vested interest. In addition, the identity of a sport team includes more than just its logo or slogan. It involves the players, history, culture, and follower base, all of which contribute to the unique brand of the sport.

In this context, the challenge of building and maintaining relationships with sport stakeholders remains a significant issue. The rapid growth of digital technology has forced sport marketers to turn to digital marketing strategies to establish and strengthen these relationships. However, the unique complexities of the sport sector namely, the interconnectedness of three sectors of sport (government sector, non-profit sector, and corporate sector), as well as the three pillars of sport marketing (marketing of sport, marketing through sport and marketing by sport), are not sufficiently addressed by existing marketing frameworks. Hence, the aim of this study to create a digital marketing framework for sport marketing by using the SOSTAC® framework as overarching structure to inform the development of more effective digital marketing strategies for sport organisations and marketers in South Africa.

The components required for such a framework were evaluated empirically through a multimethod research approach of qualitative and quantitative research. To create such a framework, the researcher made use of (1) a literature review of the sport environment in South Africa and the principles of a digital marketing strategy; (2) semi-structured interviews with sport marketers on what their digital marketing strategies were; (3) content analysis of the participating sport organisations' websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts to establish best practice digital marketing strategies; and (4) an electronic survey to determine sport stakeholders' perceptions of their sport organisation's digital marketing strategies.

The research findings highlight the importance of stakeholder aspects such as stakeholder centricity, interactivity and engagement, personalisation and customisation, community building,

and the stakeholder experience while measuring and monitoring digital marketing campaigns for feedback and effectiveness evaluation. The sport sector's strategic digital marketing focus should be adapted to attain its goal of relationship building and it should incorporate six stages, namely: a foundational analysis, strategic planning, data-driven strategies for personalisation, integrating content with technology, sustainability and ethical engagement, and performance evaluation and adaptation.

KEYWORDS: content marketing; digital marketing; digital marketing management; digital marketing tools; engagement; interactivity; new technology; relationship building; sport; sport digital marketing strategies; sport sectors; stakeholder journey.

OPSOMMING

Sport het 'n groot bedryf in Suid-Afrika geword en sportorganisasies probeer voortdurend om 'n mededingende voordeel te verkry. Sport beskik oor 'n kenmerkende kwaliteit vanweë die inherente onvoorspelbaarheid daarvan. Sportgebeurtenisse het die vermoë om die emosies, vlak van opwindning en vlak van betrokkenheid van toeskouers te verander, afhangende van die uitslag van 'n spesifieke gebeurtenis of wedstryd. Sportbelanghebbendes se rol is meer as bloot die van klante, aangesien hulle 'n diep emosionele verbintenis en opregte besorgdheid vir hul spanne en atlete het. Hulle verlang 'n diep en interaktiewe betrokkenheid by hul sportspan. Sport, wat inherent sosiaal is, floreer ook deur die vestiging van gemeenskappe en aktiewe betrokkenheid. Beide van aangesig tot aangesig en virtuele interaksies is noodsaaklik vir die kweek van 'n gevoel van gemeenskap onder belanghebbendes met 'n gevestigde belang. Daarbenewens sluit die identiteit van 'n sportspan meer as net sy logo of slagspreuk in. Dit behels die spelers, geskiedenis, kultuur en volgelingebasis, wat alles bydra tot die unieke handelsmerk van die sport.

In hierdie konteks bly die uitdaging om verhoudings met sportbelanghebbendes te bou en in stand te hou 'n belangrike kwessie. Die vinnige groei van digitale tegnologie het sportbemarkers gedwing om hulle tot digitale bemarkingstrategieë te wend om hierdie verhoudings te vestig en te versterk. Die unieke kompleksiteite van sport naamlik die onderlinge verbondenheid van die drie sektore van sport (regeringsektor, nie-winsgewende sektor, en korporatiewe sektor), sowel as die drie pilare van sportbemarking (bemarking van sport, bemarking deur sport en bemarking van sport vir deelname), word egter nie voldoende deur bestaande bemarkingsraamwerke aangespreek nie. Daarom is die doel van hierdie studie om 'n digitale bemarkingsraamwerk vir sportbemarking te skep deur die SOSTAC®-raamwerk as oorkoepelende struktuur te gebruik deur die ontwikkeling van meer effektiewe digitale bemarkingstrategieë vir sportorganisasies en -bemarkers in Suid-Afrika.

Die komponente wat vir so 'n raamwerk benodig word, is empiries geëvalueer deur 'n multimetode navorsingsbenadering van kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe navorsing. Om so 'n raamwerk te skep, het die huidige navorser gebruik gemaak van (1) 'n literatuuroorsig van die sportomgewing in Suid-Afrika en die beginsels van 'n digitale bemarkingstrategie; (2) semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met sportbemarkers oor wat hul digitale bemarkingstrategieë was; (3) inhoudontleding van die deelnemende sportorganisasies se webwerwe, Facebook-bladsye en Instagram-rekeninge om vas te stel hoe hulle hul digitale bemarkingstrategieë toegepas het; en (4) 'n elektroniese opname om sportbelanghebbendes se persepsies van hul sportorganisasie se digitale bemarkingstrategieë te bepaal.

Die navorsingsbevindinge beklemtoon die belangrikheid van belanghebbende aspekte soos sentrisiteit, interaktiwiteit en betrokkenheid, verpersoonliking en aanpassing, gemeenskapsbou, en die ervaring terwyl digitale bemarkingsveldtogte gemeet en gemonitor word vir terugvoer en effektiwiteitsevaluering. Die sportsektor se strategiese digitale bemarkingsfokus moet aangepas word om sy doelwit van verhoudingsbou te bereik en dit moet ses fases insluit, naamlik: 'n grondliggende analise, strategiese beplanning, data-gedrewe strategieë vir verpersoonliking, die integrasie van inhoud met tegnologie, volhoubaarheid en etiese betrokkenheid, en prestasie-evaluering en -aanpassing.

SLEUTELWOORDE: bemarking deur inhoud; digitale bemarking; digitale bemarking bestuur; digitale bemarking instrumente; betrokkenheid; interaktief; nuwe tegnologie; verhoudings bou; sport; sport digitale bemarkingstrategie; sport sektore.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	I
ABSTRACT III	
OPSOMMING	V
 CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT	 1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 THE CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA	3
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	6
1.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS	7
1.5 GENERAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	8
1.6 SPESIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	8
1.7 GUIDING THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS	8
1.8 RESEARCH METHODS.....	9
1.8.1 Literature review	9
1.8.2 Empirical study	12
1.8.3 Qualitative research approach	12
1.8.3.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	13
1.8.3.2 Content analysis of digital marketing functionalities	13
1.8.4 Quantitative research approach.....	14
1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY	14
1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERAIONS	15
1.11 CHAPTER LAYOUT.....	15

CHAPTER 2	CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA	18
2.1	INTRODUCTION	18
2.2	THE CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA	18
2.2.1	The history of South African Sport	19
2.3	SPORT GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA.....	22
2.4	THE ORGANISATION OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA	24
2.4.1	The sectors of the sport industry in South Africa.....	24
2.4.1.1	The government sector of sport in South Africa	25
2.4.1.2	The non-profit sector of sport in South Africa.....	27
2.4.1.3	The corporate sector of sport in South Africa.....	28
2.4.2	Interconnectedness of the three sport sectors	30
2.5	FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT MARKETING.....	31
2.5.1	The influence of the diversity of the sport environment on sport marketing	32
2.5.2	Influence of new technology on sport marketing	33
2.5.3	Influence of COVID-19 and its aftermath on sport marketing	35
2.5.4	The 3 Pillars of sport marketing	37
2.6	CONCLUSION	38
CHAPTER 3	UTILISING DIGITAL MARKETING IN RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH SPORT STAKEHOLDERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW	41
3.1	INTRODUCTION	41
3.2	THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL AGE	42
3.3	DIGITAL MARKETING PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	44

3.3.1	Stakeholder centricity	44
3.3.2	Interactivity, engagement and two-way communication	45
3.3.3	Personalisation and Customisation.....	47
3.3.4	The stakeholder journey	48
3.3.5	The stakeholder experience.....	51
3.3.6	Content marketing	52
3.3.6.1	Content formats	54
3.3.7	Community building	54
3.3.8	Academic review of relationship building	56
3.4	DIGITAL MARKETING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	56
3.4.1	The seven Cs of digital marketing.....	57
3.5	THE DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY	60
3.5.1	The four cultural repertoires.....	60
3.5.2	Managing the digital sport marketing strategy.....	62
3.5.3	The SOSTAC® model	64
3.5.3.1	Situation analysis.....	64
3.5.3.2	Objectives.....	65
3.5.3.3	Strategy	66
3.5.3.4	Tactics	67
3.5.3.5	Actions	68
3.5.3.6	Control.....	68
3.5.4	The functionalities of a digital marketing	70

3.5.4.1	Website	71
3.5.4.2	E-mail	72
3.5.4.3	Search Engine Optimisation	73
3.5.4.4	Display and online advertising	74
3.5.4.5	Blogs	74
3.5.4.6	Customer Relationship Management system.....	75
3.5.4.7	Social media marketing	76
3.6	CONCLUSION	78
CHAPTER 4	RESEARCH METHODS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, CONTENT ANALYSIS AND QUANTITATIVE SURVEY	83
4.1	INTRODUCTION	83
4.2	THE MULTI-METHODS RESEARCH APPROACH.....	84
4.2.1	The Qualitative Research Approach	84
4.2.2	The Quantitative Research Approach	85
4.3	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	85
4.3.1	Research questions and research methods.....	86
4.3.2	Concepts and Constructs	86
4.4	RESEARCH METHODS.....	90
4.5	SAMPLING OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS.....	90
4.6	QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS	92
4.6.1	Semi-structured interviews.....	92
4.6.1.1	Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs.....	93

4.6.1.2	Measuring instrument: Interview schedule	96
4.6.1.3	Interview procedure	96
4.6.1.4	Analysis and interpretation of the data from the interviews	98
4.6.2	Content analysis of digital marketing functionalities	99
4.6.2.1	Sampling	99
4.6.2.2	Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs.....	101
4.6.2.3	Analysis of content	101
4.6.2.4	Content analysis process.....	102
4.6.2.5	Analysis and interpretation of data.....	103
4.7	QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS.....	103
4.7.1	Electronic survey	103
4.7.1.1	Sampling	104
4.7.1.2	Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs.....	104
4.7.1.3	Measuring instrument: Electronic questionnaire.....	105
4.7.1.4	Process of data collection.....	106
4.7.1.5	Analysis and interpretation of the data obtained via questionnaires	106
4.7.2	Frequency tables	107
4.7.3	Factor analysis	108
4.7.4	T-test	110
4.8	RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY	110
4.8.1	Validity of the study	110
4.8.1.1	Construct validity	111

4.8.1.2	Content validity	111
4.8.1.3	Face validity	112
4.8.1.4	Timeframe validity	112
4.8.1.5	Internal and external validity	112
4.8.1.6	The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient	113
4.8.2	Reliability of the study	113
4.9	ETHICS OF THE STUDY	114
4.10	CONCLUSION	115
CHAPTER 5	DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT MARKETERS.....	116
5.1	INTRODUCTION	116
5.2	OPINIONS ON DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY SPORT MARKETERS.....	116
5.2.1	Relationship Building	117
5.2.1.1	Interactive communication	117
5.2.1.2	Stakeholder Engagement	117
5.2.1.3	Stakeholder end-to-end experience	119
5.2.2	Digital marketing management	121
5.2.2.1	Situation analysis.....	122
5.2.2.2	Objectives.....	123
5.2.2.3	Strategy	123
5.2.2.4	Tactics	124
5.2.2.5	Actions	126

5.2.2.6	Control.....	126
5.2.3	Digital marketing functionalities	129
5.2.3.1	Website	129
5.2.3.2	Social media marketing	131
5.3	INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	133
CHAPTER 6	CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT	136
6.1	INTRODUCTION	136
6.1.1	Online presence of sport organisations.....	136
6.2	DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS' WEBSITES, FACEBOOK PAGES AND INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS	137
6.2.1	Digital integration.....	137
6.2.1.1	User engagement.....	138
6.2.1.2	Content creation	143
6.2.1.3	Community nurturing	148
6.2.1.4	Traffic generation.....	153
6.3	CONCLUSION	155
CHAPTER 7	RESULTS OF THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY	158
7.1	INTRODUCTION	158
7.2	PRESENTATION OF STATISTICS	158
7.2.1	Demographic information of the sport stakeholders	159
7.3	RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	164

7.3.1	Relationship building in terms of interactive communication	164
7.3.2	Relationship building in terms of stakeholder engagement	166
7.3.3	Relationship building in terms of stakeholder end-to-end experience.....	167
7.4	RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	170
7.4.1	Situation analysis.....	170
7.4.2	Objective	172
7.4.3	Strategy	172
7.4.4	Tactics	173
7.4.5	Action	175
7.4.6	Control.....	177
7.5	THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUNCTIONALITIES OF DIGITAL MARKETING.....	178
7.5.1	Website	178
7.5.2	Social media.....	178
7.6	VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.....	180
7.6.1	Factors identified	180
7.7	COMPARISON OF FACTORS ACCORDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.....	192
7.7.1	T-Test.....	192
7.7.2	Comparison of factors according to age.....	195
7.8	CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE FACTORS	198
7.9	CONCLUSION	207

CHAPTER 8	A DIGITAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA	210
8.1	INTRODUCTION	210
8.2	CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA	211
8.3	UTILISING DIGITAL MARKETING IN RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH SPORT STAKEHOLDERS.....	213
8.4	THE DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES USED BY SPORT ORGANISATIONS	217
8.4.1	Relationship building.....	217
8.4.2	Managing Digital Marketing	219
8.4.3	The channels and functionalities of digital marketing	221
8.5	SPORT ORGANISATION’S USE OF THE FUNCTIONALITIES OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.....	223
8.5.1	Digital integration.....	223
8.6	PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT STAKEHOLDERS ON SPORT ORGANISATION’S DIGITAL MARKETING.....	225
8.6.1	Perceptions of relationship building	225
8.6.2	Perceptions of digital marketing management	227
8.6.3	Perceptions of the functionalities of digital marketing.....	228
8.7	A DIGITAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA	232
8.7.1	Points of departure for the digital sport marketing framework	232
8.8	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	239
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	241

ANNEXURE A:	ETHICS CLEARANCE (BASSREC)	261
ANNEXURE B:	CONFIRMATION OF LANDGUAGE EDITING	263
ANNEXURE C:	TRREE CERTIFICATES (OF RESEARCHER)	264
ANNEXURE D:	INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEWS.....	268
ANNEXURE E:	ELECTRONIC SURVEY	269
ANNEXURE F:	LETTER OF INVITATION: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	275
ANNEXURE G:	SURVEY MESSAGE AND INFORMED CONSENT.....	277
ANNEXURE H:	TURNITIN REPORT	279
ANNEXURE I:	CONFIRMATION LETTER GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT	280
ANNEXURE J:	CONFIRMATION LETTER REFERENCE EDITING	281
ANNEXURE K:	CONFIRMATION LETTER TECHNICAL LAYOUT.....	282

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3-1:	Content formats	54
Table 4-1:	Concepts and constructs for semi-structured interviews, content analysis and quantitative survey	87
Table 4-2:	Research design for content analysis.....	88
Table 4-3:	Research design for quantitative survey.....	89
Table 4-4:	Sampling of sport organisations	91
Table 4-5:	Constructs of relationship building.....	94
Table 4-6:	Constructs of digital marketing management.....	94
Table 4-7:	Construct of functionalities of digital marketing.....	95
Table 4-8:	Summary of stakeholders invited for the semi-structured interviews	97
Table 4-9:	Sample for content analysis of sport organisations’ digital channels	100
Table 4-10:	Constructs of digital integration	101
Table 4-11:	Format of the electronic survey	105
Table 6-1:	Sport organisations’ digital marketing channels that were analysed	137
Table 6-2:	Breakdown of sport organisations’ followings	140
Table 7-1:	Demographic information of the respondents – genders, ages and sport preferences	159
Table 7-2:	Demographic information about years of participation.....	161
Table 7-3:	Social media channels sporting codes are active on	162
Table 7-4:	Respondents’ experience of interactive communication	165
Table 7-5:	The respondents’ experience of engagement.....	166
Table 7-6:	The respondents’ end-to-end experience	168

Table 7-7:	The respondents' preferences for end-to-end experiences.....	169
Table 7-8:	Respondents perceptions of situation analysis.....	171
Table 7-9:	The effectiveness of digital marketing channels	172
Table 7-10:	Respondents' perceptions of strategy	173
Table 7-11:	Respondents perceptions of tactics.....	174
Table 7-12:	The respondents perceptions of actions.....	176
Table 7-13:	The respondents perceptions of control	177
Table 7-14:	Respondents perceptions of the sport organisation's website	178
Table 7-15:	Respondents perceptions of the sport organisation's social media channels	179
Table 7-16:	Stakeholders' perception of the digital marketing strategies	181
Table 7-17:	The importance of relevant information on the sport organisation's website.....	182
Table 7-18:	The buying decisions of stakeholders	184
Table 7-19:	Types of content sport organisations use to interact and engage with stakeholders.....	186
Table 7-20:	Factors that are important when choosing to support a sport brand	187
Table 7-21:	Stakeholders feelings' when exposed to content from the sport organisation	189
Table 7-22:	Stakeholders interaction with content on their social media channels	190
Table 7-23:	Stakeholders prefer to watch sport.....	191
Table 7-24:	Practical significance of the effect sizes in a <i>t</i> -test.....	192
Table 7-25:	The <i>t</i> -test in terms of gender	193
Table 7-26:	Comparison of the extracted factors in terms of age	196

Table 7-27:	Correlation between Google searches and watching an event	199
Table 7-28:	Correlation between advertisements and digital marketing presence	200
Table 7-29:	Correlation between digital marketing, trust, searches and brand reputation, brand messaging and pricing.....	201
Table 7-30:	Correlation between digital marketing and trust and types of content.....	203
Table 7-31:	Correlation between searches, information, consulting and digital marketing channels	204
Table 7-32:	Correlation between information, searches, digital presence and website..	205
Table 7-33:	Correlation between information and presence and digital channels	206
Table 7-34:	Thematic grouping of concepts and factors	208

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2-1:	Context of the South African sporting landscape (Author's own interpretation).....	19
Figure 2-2:	Interconnectedness of the sport sector (Author's own interpretation)	30
Figure 3-1:	The modern stakeholder journey (adapted from Vendasta 2018)	49
Figure 3-2:	The Seven Cs of digital marketing (Authors own interpretation)	58
Figure 3-3:	The SOSTAC® strategy process model (source: PR Smith's SOSTAC® 2020).....	64
Figure 3-4:	Utilising digital marketing in relationship building (Authors own interpretation).....	80
Figure 6-1:	User engagement on sport organisations' websites	139
Figure 6-2:	Examples of sport organisations' user engagement on Facebook and Instagram.....	141
Figure 6-3:	Example of creating user engagement through reviews and polls.....	142
Figure 6-4:	Example of informative content	143
Figure 6-5:	Example of entertaining content on sport organisation's website.....	145
Figure 6-6:	Examples of entertaining content on Facebook and Instagram	147
Figure 6-7:	Examples of inspiring content on Facebook and Instagram.....	148
Figure 6-8:	Example of community nurturing on Facebook and Instagram	150
Figure 6-9:	Examples of fundraising as part of community nurturing	151
Figure 6-10:	Example of content that performs well as part of community nurturing	153
Figure 6-11:	Example of posts to create traffic to sport organisation's website.....	154
Figure 8-1:	The unique context of sport in South Africa.....	212

Figure 8-2:	Digital marketing principles for relationship building derived from literature.....	216
Figure 8-3:	Sport organisation's digital marketing strategies derived from the semi-structured interviews	222
Figure 8-4:	Functionalities of digital marketing derived from content analysis.....	224
Figure 8-5:	Perceptions of sport stakeholders on sport organisation's digital marketing derived from electronic survey.	230
Figure 8-6:	Digital marketing framework for sport organisations in South Africa	234

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Sport has become a major industry in which a great deal of economic activity takes place and organisations are continuously striving to pursue a sustainable competitive advantage in the sport market environment. As with other products and services, such as cars, books and financial services, sport can also be considered a product with unique and distinctive features, which distinguishes the sport market from others (Baena, 2019:1; Byon & Phua, 2021:75). Organisations have capitalised on this distinctiveness not only by offering a diverse range of core-products, such as shoes (Nike and Newbalance), sporting gear (Adidas), sport equipment (Gilbert and Kookaburra) and even sport supplements (Powerade and Energade), but also by providing an experience to stakeholders through innovative digital media strategies (Baena, 2019:1; Foroughi *et al.*, 2016:110; Minardi, 2021).

With the advent of new technology, the internet, smartphones, applications (apps) and social media channels, the dynamics of interaction and engagement among people have fundamentally transformed, making it possible to be connected 24/7 (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2019; Ratten & Ratten, 2011:162; SmartyAds, 2020). In South Africa alone, the internet user population was 38.8 million in 2022 and it was projected to grow to more than 41.9 million by 2025 (Statista, 2023). WhatsApp was found to be the most popular social media network, with 95% of internet users in the country using the messaging application. This was followed by Facebook and Instagram, with an 87% and 73% penetration rate respectively. Furthermore, the potential audience that can be reached through Facebook amounted to 24.2 million, which makes it an attractive marketing channel (Statista, 2023).

New technology has also changed stakeholder behaviour and consumption patterns in terms of how they think, feel and react to marketing promotions (Byon & Phua, 2021:76; Kumudha & Thilaga, 2016; Radhika *et al.*, 2023:67). Stakeholders are not only influenced by these changes but are also increasingly seeking a greater experience that extends beyond traditional marketing. Consequently, relying solely on the traditional approach of promoting sport through extensive TV exposure is becoming less effective. Further advances in technology, such as personal video recorders (PVRs), have also altered viewers' habits, enabling them to record, skip and rewind programming to suit their preferences (Byon & Phua, 2021:77; Minardi, 2021). The traditional model of one-way, mass communication is no longer the most appealing option for stakeholders

because, in today's dynamic environment, new methods of engagement and interaction have emerged that are increasingly attractive to them.

In addition, digital technologies such as e-Commerce, customer relationship management (CRM) systems and mobile apps, have transformed the competitive environment by enabling the creation of value through new stakeholder journeys and experiences, and valuable content. Before making a purchase, stakeholders now turn to internet reviews, social media, conversations and word-of-mouth recommendations from friends, family and online experts (Schaefer, 2019:48). The result is that stakeholders are more empowered, less loyal, more informed and less trusting of brands (Kotler *et al.*, 2017:11). New marketing approaches such as the stakeholder journey and stakeholder experience are therefore focused on creating a two-way dialogue and personalised experiences, leveraging digital channels and data analytics. By doing so, they offer stakeholders more value and involvement, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of communication strategies.

Furthermore, stakeholders create online communities, which constitute virtual homes where they can connect and share personal ideas, knowledge and experiences (Baena, 2019:2). The fact that people have immediate and easy access to each other has produced vast opportunities for sport organisations to implement digital marketing strategies to attract stakeholders to promote their sport and services (Minardi, 2021; World Wide Worx, 2017). Moreover, digital media is a means to interact and engage with stakeholders by providing relevant content for relationship building. Sport marketers should, therefore, be present online to market their sporting codes or products. Strategies could consist of a well-designed website, email marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), online advertising and social media marketing, to name a few (Byon & Phua, 2021:77; Kumudha & Thilaga, 2016).

Moreover, big sponsors require, for example, logos on clothing, stadium branding and naming rights, and in-person activations are increasingly shifting to digital content and social media channels, in which second screen users are the target (Minardi, 2021; SmartyAds, 2020). According to Van Heerden (2019:270), about 70% of all sponsorships in South Africa are distributed to sport. This is due to various factors such as that fans have a high level of sport awareness, they often follow more than one sport and comprise a diverse range of demographics. A significant amount of airtime is also devoted to sport on television, which is increasingly being played across international borders. Sport organisations and individuals are also readily available to be sponsored. As a result, sporting bodies more and more frequently demand a digital and content angle as a prerequisite for a sponsorship.

Keeping the abovementioned factors in mind, it could, therefore, be stated that technological advances have transformed the consumer landscape in a way that cuts across all socioeconomic brackets, including sport. Sport organisations should, thus, rethink how they communicate and deliver value to the stakeholder, rebalance mass production against personalisation and – more than ever – practise what they preach when they address marketing issues and work ethics.

The complex dynamics of sport marketing were examined as the dependent variable, with the South African sport environment defined as the independent variable to highlight its unique characteristics. This approach acknowledges that the practice and consumption of sport can differ significantly across different countries.

1.2 THE CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The term *sports (plural) marketing* and *sport (singular) marketing* are often used interchangeably but can have slightly different connotations within the industry. *Sports marketing* implies an industry of various and uncoordinated segments that have little commonality; thus, the term refers to the promotion of sport in general, such as leagues, teams and athletes, with the aim of increasing viewership, attendance and merchandise sales. On the other hand, *sport marketing* focuses more narrowly on the marketing elements directly related to a single sport, team or athlete, such as a campaign to specifically drive ticket sales for a big rugby match. Such a campaign would, for instance, be focused on enhancing the fans' experience at the venue. Both terms aim to engage fans and generate revenue but differ in their scope and focus (Mullin *et al.*, 2014:13).

In this study, the term "*sport stakeholder*" or "*stakeholder*" refers to a broad spectrum of individuals who are connected to the realm of sport. This includes both athletes and participants who are directly engaged in sporting activities, as well as fans and supporters who actively participate in and follow this sport. Furthermore, the term includes individuals who are not necessarily physically present at events but engage by watching sport through television broadcasts. Together, these groups comprise a wide range of individuals with different levels of engagement and investments in the sport they support. Each stakeholder contributes in their own distinct way to the overall sport ecosystem and its vibrancy.

By developing a unique digital marketing framework in the sport industry, these distinct differences can be viewed as a cohesive unit. The implication is that marketers need to approach the sport industry as a unified entity, utilising standardised management and marketing practices to effectively target and engage audiences across various sport activities.

The sport industry is divided into three sectors – government, non-profit and corporate, which makes it a unique industry. Furthermore, these sectors are interconnected, which contributes to the diverse nature of sport. Within these sectors, sport is played on professional and amateur levels in facilities and infrastructure provided by the government. Top athletes compete for big prize money and they have their own sponsors and a support team. However, the bulk of sport stakeholders in South Africa participate on an amateur or recreational level in an endeavour to lead healthy lifestyles and to keep fit (Cheesman, 2023; Parent & Hoye, 2018:2).

In addition, South Africa is one of the few nations on the African continent in which the population is enthusiastic about more than just one or two main sports. Since the lifting of the international sporting ban in 1992 (due to apartheid), South Africa's rich sporting history has become a major source of national pride. It is difficult to single out which sport is the biggest or most popular, but no one will argue that cycling, golf, cricket, soccer, swimming, rugby, athletics/road running and horseracing entities are hosting and participating in world-class events and have millions of stakeholders, supporters and fans (Gachanja, 2017).

South Africa has also shown that it is more than capable of hosting international tournaments and events. For example, South Africa presented the rugby, soccer, cricket and netball world cups with distinction; the Sun City golf tournament draws some of the top players in the world (Netbank Golf Challenge); the Cape Town Cycle Tour attracts more than 35,000 entries each year (Cape Town Cycle Tour, 2023); and the Comrades Marathon is by far the biggest and most famous ultra-marathon in the world, attracting more than 20,000 runners from 60 countries (Comrades Marathon, 2023). Other South African sporting codes that compete in the international arena that are rising in popularity are hockey, boxing, canoeing and sevens rugby. They are attracting big sponsorships with an ever-increasing supporter base (Gachanja, 2017; Nauright, 2010).

There are a wide range of organisations involved in the South African sport industry, namely commercial or corporate entities, non-profit organisations, associations, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, government agencies and small businesses (see paragraph 2.2.2). The events, games, products, and services that are produced satisfy similar consumer needs and wants (Shank & Lyberger, 2022:12). The sport industry in South Africa is, thus, a fitting marketplace, which includes all the suppliers of sport products and services, as well as sport being a product in itself in the form of event and team sport.

Furthermore, sport is unique because of its unpredictable nature. Sporting events can change spectators' emotions, excitement and engagement, depending on the result of an event or a game (Melton & MacCharles, 2021:242). This unpredictability can sway loyalty and interest from moment to moment, presenting a unique challenge for sport marketers to maintain and amplify

engagement regardless of outcomes. Strategies such as storytelling, highlighting team resilience, or celebrating historical victories can help maintain a positive engagement atmosphere even in defeat (Evans *et al.*, 2022; Fischer, 2019:11).

Sport stakeholders are also more than customers because they are emotionally connected and care about their teams and athletes. They want a deep, interactive engagement with their sport team. This relationship transcends mere behaviour as stakeholders invest their identity and emotions into the sport's performance and legacy. To nurture this deep connection, sport organisations can leverage personalised content, behind-the-scenes access, and interactive platforms that allow stakeholders to feel a part of the team's journey, thus enhancing loyalty and long-term engagement (Fischer, 2019:11; Melton & MacCharles, 2021:242).

The social nature of sport not only encourages but thrives on community building and active participation. Both in-person and online interactions play crucial roles in fostering a sense of community among stakeholders (Fischer, 2019:11). Organising events and interactive online forums where stakeholders can discuss, celebrate, and even critique strategies that were followed, and performances are vital. These communities bolster stakeholder engagement and can effectively turn casual viewers into loyal supporters (Evans *et al.*, 2022).

Finally, a sport team's identity is much more than its logo or slogan; it includes the players, history, culture, and supporters base, all of which contribute to the specific sport's brand (Evans *et al.*, 2022). Celebrating this rich identity through storytelling, anniversaries of significant milestones, alumni events, and engaging content that highlights historical and cultural aspects of the team can deepen stakeholders' connection to the sport. This holistic approach to brand identity helps in building a stronger, more resilient brand. (Evans *et al.*, 2022; Fischer, 2019:11; Melton & MacCharles, 2021:242).

Sport marketing, therefore, requires a customised framework that can adapt to the unpredictable nature of sport, foster emotional networks, build fan communities, provide for a diverse set of stakeholders and manage complex branding across various digital channels. It would be expected that a sport-specific framework should include an intense focus on fan engagement, storytelling, personalisation, co-creation of content and the strategic use of data and analytics to predict stakeholder behaviour and preferences.

There are also many dynamics influencing the South African sporting industry, such as politics, the instability of the Rand, cancelations of big tournaments (Cricket SA's T20 Global League in 2017) and the collapse of big companies, such as the Steinhoff debacle at the end of 2017, resulting in sport losing big sponsorships (Sportal, 2018).

Another factor that influences the South African sport market is the evolution of new technology that empowers and gives more control to the consumer. As with many other big industries and companies, the 2020–2021 Covid-19 pandemic had a massive bearing on the sporting industry. In fact, it brought sport to a near standstill globally.

These influences directly affected the operations, revenue streams and strategic planning within the sport sector. While political influences and economic instability are challenges that need to be managed, technological development and changing consumer behaviours provide opportunities for innovation and expansion. Changing consumer behaviours also underlines the importance of relationship building in the sport industry because it implies good communication, trust, collaboration and mutual support in managing challenges and seizing opportunities. Sport organisations can enhance their resilience, adaptability and overall success by building strong relationships.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The marketing environment for sport in South Africa has thus, seen a substantial transition because of technological improvements, including the expansion of the internet, artificial intelligence (AI), mobile phones, apps, video streaming and social media channels which contribute to the fact that sport is unique and consumed differently than other marketing products. This technological development has produced a unique marketing paradigm, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the digital transformation in sport marketing.

The distinctive manner in which sport is consumed and practiced as well as different sporting codes unique to South Africa, significantly deviates from patterns observed worldwide. The importance of analysing sport marketing from a local perspective, therefore, guarantees that approaches are adequately customised to align with the intricate consumption patterns and inclinations that are unique to the South African environment.

Therefore, in the context of sport marketing in South Africa, the challenge of building and maintaining relationships with sport stakeholders remains a significant issue. Moreover, the current literature (see Chapter 3) does not provide for a sport-specific digital marketing framework that caters for these challenges. This constitutes a significant gap in the literature and it, thus, remains an underexplored area of research.

The communication problem, therefore, lies in the need to create a marketing framework that can successfully address these difficulties. Such a framework should include a communication strategy that not only makes use of technological improvements, but also connects with the

emotional bond that sport stakeholders have with their favourite teams to keep them engaged, regardless of performance. Moreover, it requires marketing methods that foster community participation. Traditional marketing practices might prioritise individual consumer experience over community. However, a one-size-fits-all marketing approach might not meet the demands and interests of every group because different population groups have differing expectations, which might not be met by a blanket approach. A broad digital marketing strategy might also make it difficult to maintain a consistent and engaging brand narrative across many digital channels with different user behaviours and expectations. The communication challenges within the field of sport marketing are further intensified by factors such as audience segmentation, channel fragmentation, content saturation and the influence of emerging technologies.

Given the distinctive and diverse character of sport, the communication challenge is essentially the need to develop a balanced framework that can connect sport stakeholders successfully across a rapidly evolving technological landscape. The typical marketing communication frameworks might need to be completely rethought to develop a sport-specific model suitable for these particular conditions (Manoli, 2018:2). Because the existing marketing frameworks do not adequately capture the unique complexities of the sport industry, the aim of the study was to develop a digital marketing framework tailored specifically for sport marketing. This framework will provide valuable insights for enhancing the efficiency of digital marketing strategies employed by sport organisations and marketers, with a specific focus on the context of South Africa. By focusing on stakeholder-centric marketing approaches, the intention was to foster stronger connections between sporting brands and their communities, thereby enhancing the overall impact and efficacy of sport marketing efforts.

In light of the above, the primary research question was:

Which concepts should a digital marketing framework consist of to address the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa?

1.4 SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.4.1 What factors influence sport marketing in South Africa, according to the literature?

1.4.2 What principles of digital marketing are effective in building relationships, according to the literature?

1.4.3 What digital marketing strategies are used by sport organisations in South Africa?

1.4.4 How do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of websites, Facebook and Instagram in their digital marketing to build relationships with their stakeholders?

1.4.5 What are the sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisation's digital marketing?

1.5 GENERAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

In light of the above, the general research objective was: *To create a framework for digital marketing that addresses the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa.* Therefore, the aim of this research is to examine how a framework for a digital marketing strategy can be employed specifically for relationship building within the sectors of sport in South Africa.

1.6 SPESIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Five specific research objectives made it possible to achieve the general objective:

1.6.1. To identify the aspects of the existing literature relevant to the context of sport that can be useful in digital sport marketing in South Africa.

1.6.2 To determine the principles of digital marketing related to the building relationships, according to the literature.

1.6.3 To analyse the digital marketing strategies used by sport organisations in South Africa by means of semi-structured interviews.

1.6.4 To analyse sport organisation's use of websites, Facebook and Instagram in their digital marketing to build relationships with sport stakeholders by means of a content analysis.

1.6.5 To determine the perceptions of sport stakeholders by means of an electronic survey on sport organisation's digital marketing.

1.7 GUIDING THEORETICAL ARGUMENTS

- The transition to digital technologies has drastically altered the sport marketing landscape and created new and meaningful opportunities for organisations to interact and engage with stakeholders. This includes utilising online reviews, social media and word-of-mouth recommendations to improve the overall experience of stakeholders (Schaefer, 2019:48). However, these changes also result in stakeholders being more empowered and informed, which decreases brand trust and brand loyalty. In traditional marketing practices, organisations have focused on positioning themselves as the solution to a need, while ignoring the significance of interactivity and engaging with stakeholders (Hillebrand *et al.*,

2015:13; Mattila *et al.*, 2021:214). Focus should be placed on converting stakeholders into proponents by ensuring that digital strategies align with their requirements, interests and behaviours.

- A digital marketing framework can give a sport organisation a competitive edge by incorporating a strategy that concentrates on the most important digital marketing components for achieving its goals. The implementation of a cohesive, timely and targeted strategy will result in more informed decision-making and greater success for the forward-thinking sport organisation (Bakhtieva, 2017:473; Kerin & Hartley, 2017:28-30; Ratten & Thompson, 2021:77). The framework must direct the development of timely and targeted strategies that incorporate best practices for attaining success in a competitive environment. A comprehensive framework would also include metrics and evaluation techniques to measure the efficacy of digital marketing efforts.
- The long-term success of sport organisations in the marketing of sport, the marketing through sport and the marketing of sport to encourage participation (Mullin *et al.*, 2014:13; Van Heerden & Van Heerden, 2003:250-264) is heavily dependent on their effective use of information-driven technologies such as websites, email marketing, SEO, display and online advertising, blogs and social media. These technologies offer instant, cost-effective international reach, real-time feedback and the capacity to reach millions of people (Burgess *et al.*, 2017:16; Lemire, 2023; Raghavendra & Sudhakara, 2017:290). In this context, a digital marketing framework must be comprehensive, incorporating multiple channels and functionalities, and it must guide sport organisations in selecting and integrating the most effective technologies for their specific goals. Innovation and creativity should be at the centre of the framework, with a focus on producing engaging and beneficial experiences for stakeholders.

By incorporating these insights, a digital marketing framework for sport could assist the sport sectors to navigate a complex environment, nurturing strong relationships with stakeholders, achieving competitive advantages and achieving long-term success.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODS

1.8.1 Literature review

A literature study is a systematic and comprehensive overview of sources relevant to a specific topic. The literature study requires accuracy, objectivity thoroughness and quality in-depth analysis of resources. For the purposes of this study, two literature study chapters were

conducted. Firstly, a literature study was conducted to determine the contextual challenges sport face in South Africa. This exploration provided a description of the context, the circumstances and setting of the marketing function of the sport organisation. Secondly, a literature study was designed to plan and direct the empirical research and was conducted to critically analyse sources to identify which guidelines of digital marketing could be applicable to sport marketing. The literature study supported the argument that the unique context of sport necessitates a digital marketing framework for sport marketers in South Africa.

Before the study was undertaken, a search was done on the NEXUS (NRF database), in which no similar studies could be found. No related results were found on ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. A search was then conducted on the National ETD Portal (South African Electronic theses and dissertations), Google Scholar, SACat and the institutional repository of the NWU (Boloka), and nine related results were obtained. The focus of these studies was on several domains, including digital marketing in the publishing sector, digital marketing strategies for shopper marketing, the retail landscape and small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) enterprises in Austria, the impact of social media on the telecommunications sector and optimal strategies in supply chain management were examined.

Conradie (2016) conducted an MBA thesis titled *The development of a recommended digital marketing strategy for Pan Macmillan, South Africa*. The focus was on understanding digital marketing requirements in relation to a South African book publisher and how those requirements could be met by the publisher through the development of a digital marketing strategy. The research highlighted how to expand the current digital practices of Pan Macmillan and offered recommendations on how best to grow its digital opportunities based on the resources, limitations and digital marketing objectives of the company.

In a master's study titled *Proving marketing ROI: a digital marketing framework* by Wiltsie (2017), recommendations were made for the practice of digital marketing as a tool for shopper marketing. This study provided a framework, highlighting prevalent digital marketing techniques that could be employed for a digital marketing campaign to demonstrate and validate the return on investment in marketing.

Reddy (2017) explored digital marketing in the context of customer retail operations, titled *Digital marketing impact on the consumer decision-making process in Nike's customer retail operations in South Africa*. Although it was in the context of a sport organisation, the focus was on the impact of digital marketing on the consumers' decision-making process in Nike's customer retail operations in South Africa. The findings revealed that consumers had embraced digital marketing,

which had influenced consumer behaviour, and that digital marketing had an impact on consumers' decision-making.

In his master's dissertation, Phokwane (2020) explored factors influencing marketing strategy formulation for SMEs in Polokwane. SMEs were found to be using sales promotions, digital marketing, business branding, personal selling and email communication in their marketing communication strategies. The findings of the study illustrate that SMEs' marketing communications strategies have a positive influence on their performance and the author indicated the necessity for the SA government to put in place progressive policies that could assist SMEs to improve their marketing strategies.

Bakhtieva (2017) conducted a study titled *B2B digital marketing strategy: A framework for assessing digital touchpoints and increasing customer loyalty*. The framework was adapted to the specifics of HVAC companies in Austria. In their study, *Digital marketing framework strategies through big data*, Sayyad *et al.* (2020) investigated the use of big data in business organisations. They found that big data was useful in e-business companies.

Mello (2020) and Makwara *et al.* (2021) focused on social media as a critical aspect of digital marketing strategies. In his study, *A case of Transnet South Africa*, Mello (2020) focused only on the usage of X (Twitter) by state-owned enterprises to communicate with customers, while Makwara *et al.* (2021) found that using social media marketing to communicate with its customers was necessary for the brand to be visible and because it was an inexpensive way to promote their business, with a possibility to reach a large number of people in a short time. The latter study was conducted in the context of the telecommunication business in Zimbabwe.

Additional research by Jamshed (2022) was conducted on a framework to re-plan factors that led to purchasers' buying goals in overseeing digital presence, with a focus on commercial business ventures in Pakistan.

A digital marketing framework was recently presented by Salo (2022) that underscores the intersecting nature of digital marketing within the context of supply chain management. Salo uncovered guidelines within the domains of customer experience management (CEM), supply chain management (SCM) and innovation. These guidelines indicate potential paths for future research into the intersection of digital CEM, SCM, innovation and other intermediary components.

The above findings clearly reveal that while there is ample literature on digital marketing strategies, none of this research related to the topic of digital marketing within the sport industry

in South Africa, particularly in relation to relationship building. This investigation is therefore the first study in which the application of a digital marketing strategy to establish connections with sport stakeholders is explored.

1.8.2 Empirical study

A multi-methods research approach was followed for the empirical study. Creswell and Creswell (2017) describe the multi-methods research approach as an inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a study. Hence, it is more than merely collecting and analysing both kinds of data, because it involves the use of both approaches in harmony to strengthen the overall outcome of the study. The multi-methods research approach stems from a pragmatic viewpoint, namely non-allegiance to a singular philosophical system. The latter offers researchers the flexibility to adopt varying assumptions, utilise a range of methodologies and engage in a multitude of data-gathering and analysis techniques (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:4; Leavy, 2022:19). The basic premise of this methodology is that such integration permits a comprehensive and more synergistic utilisation of data than separate qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis (Wisdom & Creswell, 2013).

To begin with, data on the digital marketing strategies of sport marketers and their implementation on their websites, Facebook, and Instagram were analysed by means of semi-structured interviews and content analysis. Subsequently, the perspectives of sport stakeholders regarding the digital marketing strategies deployed by sport organisations were sourced by means of an electronic survey. The multi-methods approach aided in mitigating personal biases and empowered the researcher to employ both qualitative and quantitative data to present the results and findings, thus making it possible to appeal to a broader audience.

1.8.3 Qualitative research approach

The purpose of qualitative research, which is interpretive in nature, is to provide an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon. One uses words, perceptions and feelings as data sources, and methods such as interviews, experiments, focus groups and open-ended questionnaires (Leavy, 2022:19; Mohajan, 2018:24). As Leedy and Ormond (2010:95) explain, qualitative research is an exploration of non-numerical data to understand qualities that cannot be easily quantified. The research goal extends beyond simply establishing what happens; one seeks to understand how and why it happens from the stakeholders' perspective (Henning *et al.*, 2010:95). In the context of this study, qualitative research was used to analyse perceptions of how sport entities in South Africa employ digital media marketing strategies.

1.8.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

The information required to achieve research objective three, namely to analyse the marketing strategies used by sport entities in South Africa in terms of event-and team sport, were obtained from individual semi-structured interviews conducted with nine sport marketers, (four sport events and five sport teams) (see paragraph 4.6.1.1). The participants were selected on the grounds of their availability to grant the researcher an interview.

Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview in which the interviewer relies on an interview schedule to ask predetermined questions (Du Plooy, 2009:190). This type of interview allows the researcher an element of control and focus in an interview situation linked to a structured conversation. However, a semi-structured interview is also open, allowing for expansive topic exploration and new and unanticipated ideas to be brought up during the interview (Edwards & Holland, 2013:3; Stuckey, 2013:57).

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate method to gain insight into how sport marketers in South Africa conduct their digital marketing. Within the context of this study, this research method was a more desirable option than focus groups because the interview subjects (i.e., marketing managers of sport organisations) might have been hesitant in a focus group to speak openly in front of other marketing managers about their strategic and operational strategies.

1.8.3.2 Content analysis of digital marketing functionalities

A qualitative content analysis of the participating sport organisations' websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts was conducted to address research objective four. Although other functionalities of digital marketing were utilised, it was determined that only the sport organisations' websites and the abovementioned two social media channels would be analysed because the strategies of SEO marketing, email marketing, display and online advertising and blogs were all incorporated within the websites and social media channels.

Qualitative content analysis provides a systematic approach to interpreting textual data and understanding the meaning behind it. Through categorisation, analysis and interpretation of the topic, the method allows for a thorough reading of the text to uncover perceptions, values, levels of meaning and opinions (Niven, 2008:52; Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:151). Qualitative content analysis is widely used across a range of fields, including literature and rhetoric, marketing, psychology and cognitive sciences, and can be applied to a variety of sources, including literature, conversations, emails, meetings and policy documents (Du Plooy, 2009:221; Julien, 2008:120).

1.8.4 Quantitative research approach

In the quantitative research approach, the objective is to collect numerical data from a specific group of people to be analysed with statistical calculations of data to explain a certain occurrence or phenomenon (Muijs, 2012:40). Berger (2018) describes the quantitative research approach as a systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. The quantitative research approach is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena (Goertzen, 2017:12). The process of measurement is central to quantitative research because it provides the fundamental connection between empirical observation and mathematical expression of quantitative relationships.

An electronic survey was used to determine the perceptions of sport stakeholders on the digital marketing strategies applied by sport entities. Closed questions were used, for which the respondents could select an answer, as well as open questions, inviting the respondents to add their own comments. The stakeholders were made aware of the survey via sport organisations social media channels and the questionnaires were administered via Survey Monkey, an online survey development cloud-based service. The data obtained from the electronic survey were analysed using Statistical (StatSoft Inc., 2013) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2013) statistical computer programmes. The Statistical Consultation Services at North-West University's Potchefstroom campus rendered assistance with the analysis of the data.

1.9 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study makes a comprehensive original contribution to the field of digital marketing strategies within the South African sport industry. It achieves this by providing evidence-based recommendations, a focused analysis of digital channels, and practical frameworks that are tailored to specific contexts. Fresh insights into the effective involvement of stakeholders in an environment characterised by rapid digital transformation were presented.

The significance of this study lies in the development of a digital marketing framework that caters specifically for the unique challenges of the sport industry in South Africa. The theoretical perspective of relationship building in digital marketing was used as a point of departure to conceptualise a digital marketing framework to address the complexities of the South African sport context. The proposed framework, which has a focus on digital marketing, should equip and enable the digital marketing function of sport organisations to understand, integrate and address the full spectrum of digital marketing. This involves having interactions and engaging with stakeholders and having two-way conversations, which is important because of the

interconnectedness of the sporting sectors and the unpredictable nature of sport. While it is acknowledged that circumstantial factors might influence which framework the sport marketer adopts, the study provides findings that could help the sport marketer to make an informed decision regarding the specific aspects of their digital sport marketing approach.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study was approved by the Basic and Social Sciences Ethics Committee of the NWU (NWU-01019-20-A7) (see annexure A). The participants in this study were contacted in advance to seek their cooperation in the study and to obtain their permission prior to the semi-structured interviews. They were informed about the ethical requirements of the study and that their details would be kept confidential. The researcher always maintained research integrity by not being selective in reporting and analysing the qualitative and quantitative data.

The Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation (TRREE) course for ethics training was completed (see annexure C) by the researcher and promotor, which further ensured that the highest academic standards were met and that the research contributed to the body of knowledge in digital sport marketing.

Raw data was not included in annexure E as it could potentially violate the Protection of Personal Information Act, (POPIA) Act No. 4 of 2013.

1.11 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This dissertation contains eight chapters, each addressing a specific aspect of the investigation into digital marketing in the context of sport in South Africa. Chapter 1, set the stage by introducing the research problem, context, aims and methods, while touching upon the potential contributions of the study.

Chapter 2 consists of a comprehensive examination of literature related to the sport industry in South Africa. It explores various factors that impact sport marketing, including the distinct sport environment, advancements in technology, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter aims to present the specific context of sport in South Africa, highlighting its differences from the global consumption of sport.

Chapter 3, the second part of the literature review, is an exploration of the incorporation of digital marketing in the field of sport marketing. The theoretical foundation for the digital marketing framework is established in this chapter. The theories pertaining to digital marketing are examined in order to emphasise the evolving focus on building relationships through interactive

communication, engaging stakeholders and providing a comprehensive end-to-end experience for all stakeholders. A section is dedicated to the management of digital marketing strategies, thereby introducing a strategic element into the discourse. Insight into the utilisation of various digital functionalities, such as websites, email marketing, SEO tactics, blogs, CRM systems and social media, completes the chapter, shedding light on the application of these strategies.

In Chapter 4, a detailed account of the research methods utilised in the empirical phase of the study is provided. The multi-methods research approach, which includes qualitative and quantitative research, is described and its suitability for the study is explained. Additionally, the three data-collection methods utilised, namely semi-structured interviews, qualitative content analysis of the digital functionalities of sport organisations' websites and social media channels, and an electronic survey are described, followed by an explanation of how the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of data was ensured.

Chapter 5 constitutes a fundamental component of this study, as it presents results from a content analysis derived from semi-structured interviews. The relevance of this chapter lies in its direct examination of the perspectives, experiences, and strategies shared by industry professionals, providing rich, qualitative insights into the current state of digital marketing within the sport sector. Following analysis of these interviews, this chapter provides empirical evidence that either supports or challenges existing theories and models of digital marketing in sport, helping to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and real-world application. Furthermore, it deepens the understanding of how digital marketing strategies are conceptualised, implemented, and evaluated by sport organisations in South Africa, shedding light on their unique challenges and opportunities offering a nuanced view of the effectiveness of different digital marketing tactics in engaging fans, promoting events, and building brand loyalty within the South African context.

Chapter 6 delves into the empirical analysis of digital marketing practices within the South African sport industry by examining the content and functionalities of sport websites, Facebook pages, and Instagram accounts. This analytical approach is important to the study, as it provides concrete examples of how digital platforms are utilised by sport organisations for marketing purposes. By focusing on the content analysis of these digital assets, the chapter offers a snapshot of the current digital marketing landscape in the sport sector, highlighting the strategies employed to engage audiences, promote events, and build community online. The link to the research topic is direct and substantial, in that digital marketing strategies – particularly in the context of sport – hinge on the effective use of online platforms to reach and interact with participants.

Chapter 7 focuses on sport stakeholders' perceptions regarding the use of digital marketing by sport organisations, which is crucial for understanding the impact and effectiveness of digital

marketing strategies from diverse perspectives. What makes this chapter pertinent is its offering of direct insights into how digital marketing efforts are received and interpreted by those most closely involved with or affected by these strategies, including fans, athletes, sponsors, and management. By analysing feedback from an electronic survey, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of stakeholder satisfaction, perceived strengths and weaknesses, and areas for improvement in digital marketing practices within the sport sector. It enriches the study by adding a layer of qualitative data reflecting the true experiences and opinions of stakeholders. It also offers an essential bridge between the theoretical aspects of digital marketing strategies and their practical outcomes, highlighting the real-world implications of these strategies on stakeholder engagement and relationship building.

Finally, Chapter 8 is pivotal in that it synthesises all findings from the study to offer a cohesive conclusion and set forth practical recommendations, culminating in the presentation of a digital marketing framework specifically designed for the sport sector in South Africa. This chapter addresses the general research question by proposing a comprehensive framework, encapsulating the study's empirical insights and theoretical discussions as actionable strategies. The purpose of the proposed framework is to guide sport organisations in the effective leveraging of digital marketing tools and platforms to engage their audiences, enhance their brand presence, and achieve their marketing objectives within the unique South African context.

Chapter 8 further demonstrates how digital marketing can be optimised in the sport industry by drawing on specific insights gained from the analysis of sport websites, social media usage, stakeholder perceptions, and digital marketing practices identified in previous chapters. It serves as a strategic roadmap for sport organisations, highlighting how digital channels can be utilised more effectively to reach and resonate with diverse audiences in South Africa. With recommendations firmly based on the findings of this study, the proposed framework is both evidence-based and tailored to address the specific challenges and opportunities identified in the research. This alignment underscores the study's contribution to the field, providing a valuable resource for both academics and practitioners interested in the advancement of digital marketing strategies in sport.

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided the foundation for the research by establishing its basis, scope, and direction. It aims to engage the reader's interest, provide essential context, and clarify what the research will explore and contribute to the field.

Chapter 2 provides a contextual background for the research, specifically focusing on sport marketing in South Africa. This chapter aims to give an understanding of the unique characteristics of sport in South Africa, which serves as the foundation for the research. This approach ensures that the study's findings are fully incorporated into the unique circumstances of the local environment, recognising and addressing the different challenges and opportunities that define the sport scene in South Africa. Its objective is to clarify the distinct sporting landscape in South Africa, highlighting that it is different from the global sporting scene.

The aim of this chapter is to answer the first specific research question:

What factors influence sport marketing in South Africa, according to the literature?

To comprehensively address this question, the South African sport context is explored in relation to the governance and organisation of sport in South Africa, to indicate the uniqueness of sport, what shapes it and how it is managed and consumed. The analysis of the interconnectedness of the sport sectors highlights the multifaceted governance structure and the diverse interests and needs of the sporting ecosystem. Furthermore, the impact of new technology and COVID-19 on sport is explored as a focus of the study.

2.2 THE CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The context of sport refers to the political, economic, social, technology, environmental and legal factors that shape and influence sport and its development. It includes the history, values, beliefs, norms and traditions of sport in differing societies and cultures, as well as the challenges and opportunities that sport faces in the contemporary world (Shank & Lyberger, 2022:12). Knowing the context of sport helps one to understand why it matters to people and how it affects their lives.

A summary of the South African sport context is presented Figure 2.1. and is discussed below.

The Context of Sport in South Africa

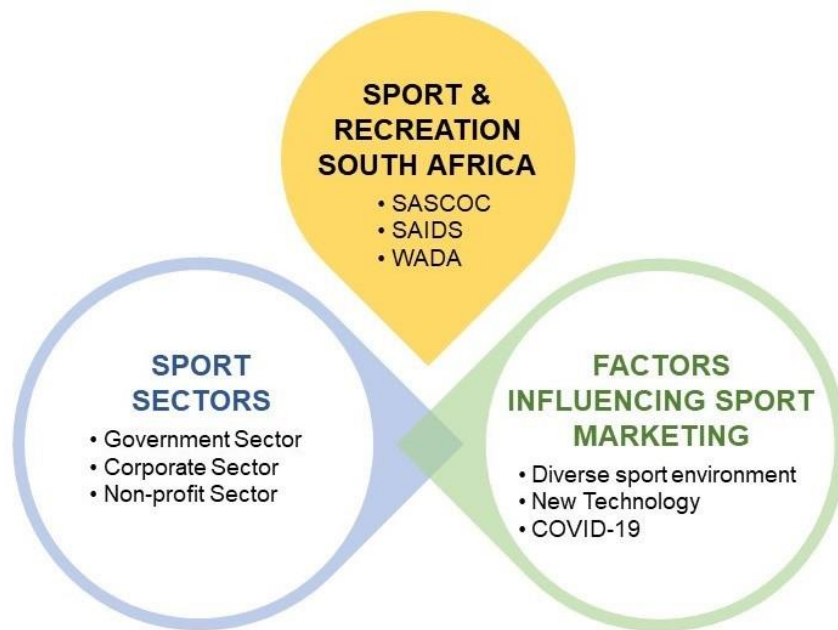


Figure 2-1: Context of the South African sporting landscape (Author's own interpretation)

As indicated in the above figure, Sport and Recreation South Africa is the main governing body of South African sport, in which the various sectors of sport – government, non-profit and corporate – are organised and where sport marketing takes place. The governance of sport and the organisation of sport is discussed in detail in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4.

To provide a rich picture of the context of sport in the country, the history of sport in South Africa is first described, tracing the development of sport governance.

2.2.1 The history of South African Sport

Understanding the historical development of sport in South Africa is not only a chronological exploration but also an analysis that enhances the value of this research. The historical backdrop of sport in a country characterised by distinct cultural, social, and political environments offers helpful insights into the present dynamics and tactics of sport marketing. By examining the past, this study provides an understanding of how historical events, cultural changes, and new policies have influenced consumers' preferences, involvement, and conduct regarding sport, which facilitates the customisation of marketing tactics in South Africa. An understanding of the progression of sport appeal, the influence of economic variables, and the worldwide expansion of

South African sport unveils the factors that have shaped the sport marketing landscape. Therefore, conducting an analysis of the past is crucial, as it provides a basis for forecasting future patterns, recognising obstacles and achievements, and directing the strategic course of sport marketing in South Africa with an enlightened viewpoint.

The history of South African sport can be traced back to the 1800s, when sport was brought to the continent by the British settlers (Odendaal, 2003). It continued to grow through the establishment of sport clubs and federations, and the country competed in the Olympic Games for the first time in 1896. Since then, it has hosted touring sides from countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, France and India in a wide variety of sporting disciplines (Allen, 2015:48). With the introduction of the policy of apartheid in 1948, South Africa was banned from most international events and, by the mid-1970s, was effectively banned from all sporting codes internationally (Miller, 2012:168). In 1992, the ban on South African sport was lifted, which allowed South Africa to compete that year in Australia in the one-day cricket world cup and the International Olympic Games in Barcelona.

The readmission to international sport saw South Africa's victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which was followed up by the victory in the 1996 African Football Cup of Nations on home soil. The ultimate in the period after readmission was Josiah Thugwane winning the gold medal at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, thus becoming the first black South African to win an Olympic gold medal (Bouah, 2016:3). The next few years were less successful for South Africa. However, since 2007, 2019 and 2023 there were victories in the Rugby World Cup, and some success stories in the under-20 teams and sevens rugby, as well as on the cricket field and with individual athletes such as Caster Semenya, Wayde van Niekerk and Chad le Clos at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. Even though the country could compete in cricket, football, athletics and many other sporting codes internationally, it was without many significant results (Bouah, 2016:3). This could be ascribed to the legacy of racial segregation in sport during apartheid and its lasting impact in the form of a lack of infrastructure to develop athletes, especially in the rural areas, and thus a lack of professional training (Odendaal, 2003).

Nevertheless, South Africa has a rich sporting history and is fully integrated in the era of professional sport. The country is thus able to participate and compete internationally with the best of the best. The professional era also created many marketing prospects for sport clubs and organisations.

A defining moment in the history of sport was the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019 resulting in the termination of all professional and non-professional sport worldwide (Deloitte, 2020; Ramagole *et al.*, 2020). To safeguard the health of athletes and others involved, most major sporting events

were cancelled for 2020. On an international level, the Olympics, and Paralympics did not take place in 2020, for the first time in the history of the modern games. The event was postponed to 2021. On a national level, big events such as the Comrades and Two Oceans marathons, Super Rugby and PSL soccer league games, and all provincial and local sport were also cancelled (Deloitte, 2020). The influence of COVID-19 on sport in South Africa is discussed in detail in section 2.5.

At this stage, it is worth noting that South Africa's legacy in terms of sport is represented by resilience and a successful transition to the professional sporting age, which places the country among the top-tier international competitors. The transition from amateur to professional competition in sport is not only a source of personal fulfilment for athletes; it is also a source of national pride and a victory for the entire community. An example of national pride and the role of sport in fostering nation building was the victory of the Springboks during 2023 Rugby World Cup, which was followed by the official declaration of a public holiday on 15 December 2023.

At the same time, the development of professional sport has opened an infinite number of marketing opportunities for organisations that are linked with various cricket, rugby, soccer and other sport leagues. Organisations see sport as a powerful channel for engaging audiences and promoting their brands. Because of the prevalence of live matches, broadcast games and passionate sport fandoms, the landscape is ideal for marketing initiatives such as sponsorships, endorsements and advertising campaigns.

In addition, sport clubs and organisations are leveraging their heightened visibility through the implementation of diverse marketing strategies. These include a variety of revenue streams, namely the selling of items and the implementation of digital marketing tactics on various social media sites. The implementation of methods such as the creation of captivating content, the cultivation of communities and facilitation of co-creation with participants have become prominent focal points in the marketing agendas of sport organisations. The emergence of many marketing prospects hold the potential for significant growth and exert a profound influence on the future direction of sport marketing in South Africa.

To create a competitive, safe and inclusive environment that upholds the values of sportsmanship, fairness and integrity, effective sport governance is crucial and is therefore discussed in the subsequent section to illustrate how sport is being regulated in South Africa.

2.3 SPORT GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In this study, the exploration of sport governance yields an essential understanding of the structural and regulatory framework necessary to navigate the sport marketing landscape in South Africa. The governance of sport refers to the principles, policies, rules and practices that guide and control the decision-making and behaviour of sport organisations and their members. This includes the issues of accountability, transparency, democracy, participation, ethics and integrity, which affect the quality and performance of sport organisations (Kluka *et al.*, 2022; Thompson *et al.*, 2022). The governance of sport provides insights on how sport organisations are led, directed and supervised.

As indicated in Figure 2.1 above, South African sport is regulated by **Sport and Recreation South Africa (SRSA)** which is the national government department responsible for the policy, provision and delivery of sport. The policy is contained in a white paper that was first presented in 1994. Its primary focus is to provide opportunities for all South Africans to participate in sport and the management of the regulatory framework thereof, and to provide funding for the various sporting codes. Through several campaigns and events, SRSA also encourages mass participation in sport and recreation, indigenous games and school sport (Sport Recreation South Africa, 2012).

However, a study by the African Sport Index identified four crucial problem areas regarding sport policies in South Africa, namely a high turnover of senior political and administrative leadership, leading to continuous changes to policy strategies; a decrease in the effectiveness of implementing policy strategies; changes to policies, strategies and plans that did not allow for the maturation of the strategies; and, lastly, politics within sport, from government and civil society, which has led to the restrained growth of sport as a whole (Keim & De Coning, 2014:21). These issues could significantly hamper the development and growth of sport in South Africa, limiting its potential to contribute to societal goals and objectives. Addressing these issues should be a priority for all stakeholders involved in South African sport.

The most notable role players in the South African sporting landscape are the South African Sport Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC), the South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport (SAIDS) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

SASCOC is the national multi-coded sporting body responsible for the preparation, presentation, and performance of teams at all multi-coded events, namely the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Games, All Africa Games, Olympic Youth Games, Commonwealth Youth Games and Zone VI Games. Its main objective is to promote and develop

high-performance sport and to act as the controlling body for sport. The various national federations and provincial sport councils are affiliated to SASCOC, which is also responsible for the awarding of National Protea Colours to athletes and officials who have met the criteria to represent South Africa in their respective sporting codes and arenas (SASCOC, 2023).

However, through the years, SASCOC has made the headlines for all the wrong reasons and in 2017 a ministerial committee of inquiry was appointed to investigate alleged irregularities and malpractices in the governance and management of SASCOC. The report was released on 15 September 2018 with recommendations and the appointment of a facilitator (PMG, 2019). In October 2020, an administrator was appointed with the mandate to implement the recommendations of the inquiry report and oversee the elections of a new board.

SAIDS's core function is to promote participation in sport without the use of prohibited performance-enhancing substances and methods. The institute received its mandate and jurisdiction from the *Drug-Free Sport Act* (Act No. 14 of 1997) to carry out drug testing across all sporting codes. It also has an educational role in that it is responsible for educating sport people on fair play and the harmful effects of the use of prohibited performance-enhancing drugs (SAIDS, 2023).

WADA is an international independent agency composed and funded by the sporting movement and governments of the world. It established an African regional office in Cape Town in 2004 to coordinate the anti-doping activities of the agency throughout Africa. Some of its activities are scientific research, education, the development of anti-doping capacities and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code. South Africa serves as the African representative on the Wada's executive committee (WADA, 2023).

The governance of sport plays a crucial role in engaging stakeholders, shaping public perception, and adapting to social, legal, and technological changes. The process entails managing an extensive network of individuals and organisations, such as government entities, sport associations, and athletes, whose interests and influences marketers must navigate in order to develop partnerships and improve promotional endeavours. Marketers are guided by ethical considerations and values embedded in governance policies to align their strategies with the audience's values, thus fostering trust and loyalty. By thoroughly grasping the complexities of sport governance, the study acquires a valuable viewpoint on the opportunities and challenges in the sport marketing field. This ensures that strategies not only adhere to regulations but also resonate with the target audiences and promote sustainable growth in South Africa's sport sector.

It can, therefore, be stated that, apart from the controversy that surrounds SASCO, there is a well-established sport governance system in South Africa that regulates sport and sport participation. To orientate the reader, the next section is about the organisation of sport and illustrates how sport is structured, managed and consumed.

2.4 THE ORGANISATION OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Whereas the governance of sport involves the policies, principles and rules of sport, the organisation of sport relates to the structures, systems and processes that are involved in the delivery and management of sport at different levels (Thompson *et al.*, 2022:3-7). The unpacking hereof is essential to the study, as it offers a deeper understanding of the structural framework in which sport marketing in South Africa functions. In this regard, sport can be divided into three sectors: the government, corporate and non-profit sectors, which include stakeholders such as governments, national and international sport federations, clubs, leagues, athletes, coaches, officials, sponsors, media and fans (Parent & Hoye, 2018).

The organisation of sport plays a crucial role in understanding the various aspects of sport planning, coordination, regulation and evaluation. It is closely related to the context of sport (see paragraph 2.2) and sport governance (see paragraph 2.3) because these elements provide the framework for effective management, oversight and decision-making within the sport industry.

By establishing clear guidelines, policies and rules, sport governance ensures that the various components of the industry, from athletes and coaches to clubs, federations and event organisers, function efficiently and harmoniously (Kluka *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, a well-organised sport environment contributes to the growth and development of the industry, fostering increased participation, healthy competition and public engagement. With this background, the sectors of the sport industry in South Africa are described to illustrate the various components that make up the sport industry, their roles and responsibilities, and how they interact with one another.

2.4.1 The sectors of the sport industry in South Africa

The term “industry” can be defined as a market in which similar or related products and services are offered and are categorised according to the types of products and services it presents to the stakeholders. The sport industry comprises sporting venues, gymnasiums, clubs and teams, leagues, athletes, sporting apparel and shoes, merchandise, sporting associations and the Olympic Games. There can, thus, be a wide range of organisations involved in the sport industry, namely, commercial or corporate entities, non-profit organisations, associations, manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, government agencies and small businesses. The products and services

that are produced satisfy similar consumer needs and wants. The sport industry is, thus, a marketplace which includes all the suppliers of sport products and services, as well as sport as a product, that satisfy the needs of sport consumers (Parent & Hoye, 2018:12; Shank & Lyberger, 2022; Smith, 2012).

It is imperative to integrate the three sport sectors within a framework for digital sport marketing as each sector has a unique function in the development, promotion, and administration of sport, influencing different facets of sport marketing strategies. The framework will, therefore, accommodate the complex and unique characteristics of these sectors, as well as the multifaceted nature of the sport industry. By doing so, it will serve as a strategic tool to ensure consistency and effectiveness in digital marketing endeavours across the diverse sport landscape in South Africa.

2.4.1.1 The government sector of sport in South Africa

In South Africa, the government sector includes the national, provincial and local governments, all of which view sport as a vehicle for nationalism, economic development and/or social development. As such, the government can enact policies and legislation to support, control or regulate the activities of the sport organisation, for example, SRSA (see section 2.3). Understanding the role and influence of this sector is essential for marketers, as it directly affects the distribution of funds, prioritisation of sport development, and regulatory structure. In order to secure support and access to resources, it is imperative that marketing strategies align with governmental goals and regulations.

The South African government sector is also involved in the development of sport by providing funding and facilities for sport, such as building stadiums and hosting the Rugby World Cup in 1995, the Cricket World Cup in 2009 and the Soccer World Cup in 2010. Through SASCO, it provides training institutes and elite testing facilities for national teams that participate in the Olympic Games and other international competitions. It also takes responsibility for anti-doping and providing an overall regulatory environment through SAIDS and WADA (see paragraph 2.2).

The downside is that the government's focus on high-profile sport and events such as the Rugby World Cup and the Soccer World Cup might lead to an imbalance in resource allocation. Other sport that are less popular but equally important for fostering a diverse sport culture might not receive adequate attention or funding.

The government sector also makes it possible for top athletes such as Caster Semenya, Wayde van Niekerk and Chad le Clos to participate at the Olympic Games and win gold medals in

athletics and swimming. While they are supported by the government sector, they also are professional athletes with their own sponsors and support teams.

The South African government similarly uses sport to build nationalism (Jacobs *et al.*, 2019). A good example was when the Springboks won the Rugby World Cup in 1995 and President Nelson Mandela appeared in the stadium wearing a Springbok jersey. The same can be said when the country hosted the 2010 Soccer World Cup, when the whole country united behind South Africa's national soccer team, Bafana Bafana. Hosting national and international events also bolsters economic development in that supporters and fans spend money while following their teams. In this regard, as stated by Söderman and Dolles (2013), sport has emerged as a sector that makes a major contribution to economic and commercial activity. It also contributes to social development by creating jobs with the building of stadiums and employing people during sporting events (Kirkpatrick *et al.*, 2018:8-11). However, the construction of large stadiums and facilities for hosting international events can lead to questions about their sustainability and utility post-event because such infrastructures could be underutilised or abandoned after the event, leading to a wastage of resources. Hence, a framework for sport marketing would contribute to the overall development and sustainability of this sport in terms of raising awareness and building engagement, leveraging digital channels to promote this sport and permitting engagement with a variety of stakeholders.

The government sector regularly employs marketing principles to attain their sport objectives but does not get directly involved in the marketing of sport because it requires a specialised form of marketing (Hassan, 2018:4; Parent & Hoye, 2018:7). In South Africa, the national and local governments are more focused on providing subsidies and promoting sport locations. An example was when the South African government had to bid on hosting the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Local governments, for example, also promote their cities to attract large sport events. The government sector, thus, plays an indirect and supportive role rather than a direct, hands-on role to promote specific sport or events, which could potentially limit the reach and impact of sport promotion efforts.

Given the above, it is evident that the introduction of a digital sport marketing framework holds the potential to greatly enhance the government's efforts in promoting and advancing the field of sport. Although the government sector is not directly involved in sport marketing, given their integral role, it is essential that a sport marketing framework include strategies that engage and leverage governmental influence to ensure a comprehensive and effective marketing approach for the sport industry. Additionally, the use of sport can serve as an effective means for the South

African government and sport organisations to advance their aims in the realm of sport development.

2.4.1.2 The non-profit sector of sport in South Africa

As governments cannot provide all sport products and services, non-profit sport organisations in the form of local clubs, community-based associations and federations have emerged and play a crucial role in promoting sport at grassroots level (Hassan, 2018:7; Nichols *et al.*, 2016). The focus of these non-profit sport sectors is not necessarily on making money, but on the development of sport through organised competitions and participation, with a huge emphasis on the regulation and management of sport. An understanding of this sector provides marketers the opportunity to actively connect with communities, strengthen brand loyalty, and contribute to corporate social responsibility efforts. Additionally, it enables the recognition of up-and-coming talents and trends that have the potential to impact future marketing strategies.

The non-profit sector also organise international events such as the Cape Town Cycle Tour, which attracts more than 35,000 entrants each year (Cape Town Cycle Tour, 2023); the Comrades Marathon, one of the biggest and most famous ultra-marathons in the world, drawing more than 20,000 runners from 60 countries every year (Comrades Marathon, 2023); the Dusi Canoe Marathon, which covers about 120km between the cities of Pietermaritzburg and Durban in KwaZulu-Natal and is the biggest canoeing event in Africa and one of the world's most popular river marathons, attracting more than 1,600 entries each year (Dusi Canoe Marathon, 2023); and the aQuelle Midmar Mile, which is the world's largest open water swimming event, drawing over 13,000 participants to tackle the mile-long course across the Midmar Dam near Howick (aQuelle Midmar Mile, 2023). Other events are the Two Oceans Marathon, the South African leg of the Iron Man, and the Soweto and Cape Town marathons, to mention a few (Hassan, 2018:7; Parent & Hoyer, 2018:7). These events can be classified as high-profile sport events and obtain big prize money to attract top athletes, although most of the participants are amateurs and belong to a local club. According to Aisbett and Hoyer (2015), a key characteristic of these clubs is that they are administered mainly by volunteers and are considered the backbone of sport.

It is these non-profit organisation's responsibility to find resources such as sponsorships and expertise for themselves, which, in most cases, are initiated to fit a particular community's sporting need, such as a local running club, tennis club, boxing studio or and squash court, to name a few. Club members normally pay a yearly club fee and host events and/or competitions, which usually take place once a year to raise funds that are used for maintenance and operational costs.

Some of the marketing challenges non-profit sport organisations in South Africa face, with specific reference to local sport clubs, are a lack of marketing expertise, not to mention digital marketing expertise, especially when it comes to the marketing or promotion of their activities because they are run by volunteer staff (Panagiota & Vasiliki, 2018:3). This can limit their ability to effectively promote their activities and attract new members or even sponsors. Having a volunteer staff can also lead to issues related to consistency and quality management, and they might not have the necessary skills or time commitment to effectively manage the organisation. In some instances, the management of these clubs consists of older or retired people who do not necessarily have the required skills, such as not being knowledgeable about digital marketing practices. Moreover, the sporting code's rich amateur traditions often hamper their marketing activities (Hoye *et al.*, 2015:7; Panagiota & Vasiliki, 2018). Marketing initiatives are focused on low-cost, one-way communication activities, such as to emphasise the benefits of participating in sport, hoping that someone will sign-up at the tennis club (Nichols *et al.*, 2016).

Non-profit sport organisations can, thus, benefit from a digital marketing framework for growth and development and to attract crucial sponsorships.

2.4.1.3 The corporate sector of sport in South Africa

The corporate sport or professional sector in South Africa focuses on business and to make a profit (Hassan, 2018:9). According to Thompson *et al.* (2017), the core of this sector is professional teams and associations and, in the context of South Africa, includes the rugby, soccer, cricket and netball franchises such as the Sharks rugby franchise, and the Orlando Pirates soccer and Cape Cobra cricket franchises. Major events are presented by associations of the likes of the Comrades and Two Oceans marathons and the Cape Town Cycle Tour. These franchises and events have both a professional and an amateur leg, providing for both the social participant and the professional athlete, which contributes to the unique nature of sport and points to the interconnectedness of the sectors. It is crucial that marketers understand the intricacies of this industry, so as to capitalise on business prospects, establish successful collaborations, and connect with stakeholders.

Apart from the event and team sport, this sector also includes other organisations that have a financial interest in sport; for example, equipment and apparel manufacturers such as Nike and Adidas, sport retailers such as Sportman's Warehouse and TotalSport, and broadcasting companies such as SuperSport. Additionally, organisations such as telecommunications providers like MTN and Vodacom, financial institutions like ABSA and Standard Bank and companies such as SA Breweries provide big sponsorships in return for naming rights (Shank & Lyberger, 2022:21). South African Breweries, which sponsors the Castle Currie Cup, DHL, which

sponsors the Stormers rugby franchise, and FNB, which sponsors soccer and has naming rights to venues such as the FNB Soccer Stadium, are all well-known corporate sponsors of sport in South Africa. All these organisations and entities are selling and utilising sport in one way or another for financial gain in that supporters attend and follow games on television and other media, purchase the sport merchandise of their favourite team and participants who buy sport gear to take part in a sporting code (Smith, 2012:18; Trendafilova & Babiak, 2013). Any organisation, therefore, whose primary purpose is to make a profit from an association with sport may be placed in this category.

The approach that is driven by profits could result in choices that put financial gain ahead of what is in the best interest of athletes, fans and the sport itself. For instance, excessive advertising during games and events, high ticket prices or the influence of sponsors on team decisions could have a negative impact on the overall sporting experience for fans and athletes. In a sense, the sectors are in competition with one another because the financial motivation of the corporate sector might be greater than the government sector's motivation to develop sport. Even though maintaining a healthy financial position is critical, this must never be done at the expense of the game, the safety of the players or the satisfaction of the spectators. The difficulty lies in locating a model that acknowledges the significance of monetary success but at the same time upholds the principles that give sport its unique quality and make it an important component of society.

From the discussion about the corporate sector, it can be determined that there is a strong corporate sector in South African sport in that most of the top sporting codes compete on a professional level and attract big sponsorships from corporates. A digital marketing framework would help the corporate sector to navigate the industry's unique obstacles and opportunities and should include stakeholder engagement, data insights, sponsorship optimisation and collaboration.

The three sectors of sport in South Africa do not operate in isolation; they often overlap and are interdependent. Figure 2.2 depicts the interconnectedness of the sport sector in South Africa.

2.4.2 Interconnectedness of the three sport sectors

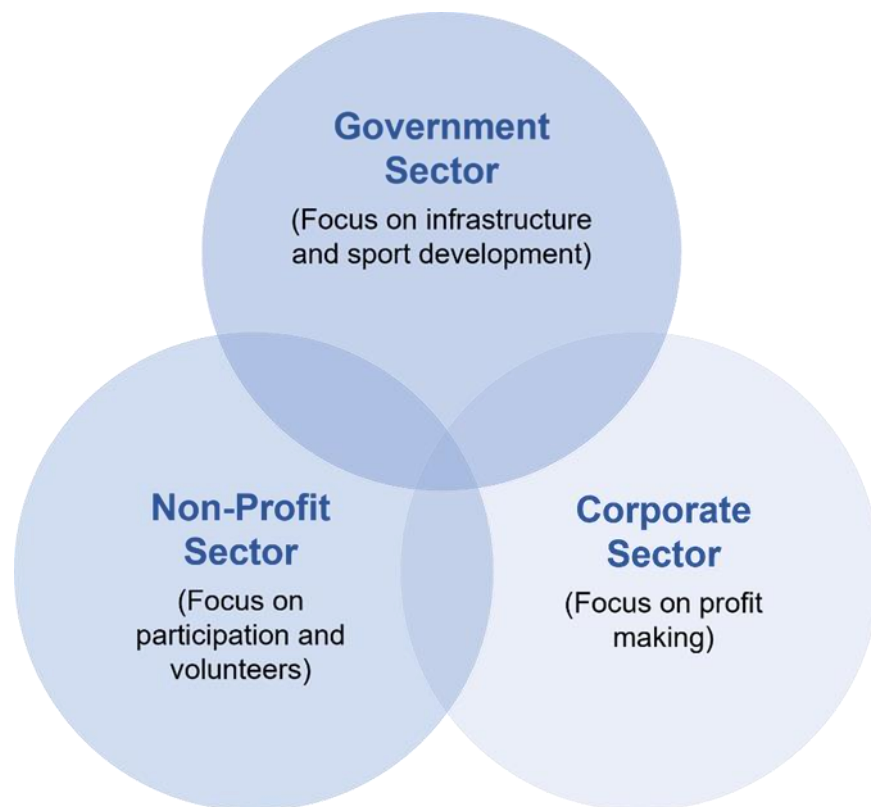


Figure 2-2: Interconnectedness of the sport sector (Author's own interpretation)

Figure 2.2 illustrates how the three sport sectors are interconnected and why they cannot be seen in isolation. The South African government provides subsidies to provincial and local governments for sport infrastructure, for instance tennis courts, swimming pools and soccer-or rugby stadiums. The building of stadiums and other sport venues, paves the way for professional sport to take place, which supports manufacturing and events organisations to do business. Those in charge of most of the so-called big sport in South Africa, such as netball, cricket, rugby and tennis, formed franchises on provincial level and operate as professional clubs. Again, the non-profit sport organisation provides athletes, coaches and administrators to facilitate elite competitions. In return, the corporate sector markets the sport to spectators to encourage participation and sometimes receives a monetary return (Hoye *et al.*, 2015:8).

The relevance of these three sectors in the study is based on their combined impact on the development and implementation of successful sport marketing strategies. Marketers face distinct opportunities and challenges in each sector, e.g., adhering to government regulations and capitalising on the commercial appeal of professional sport, while fostering community engagement to garner grassroots support. Gaining insight into the structure of the sport industry in South Africa, as well as the interaction between different sectors, enables a thorough

understanding of and approach to sport marketing. This approach not only conforms to the relevant structural and regulatory frameworks, but also takes advantage of the opportunities available in South African sport. It yields strategies that are comprehensive, inclusive, and well-positioned for success.

The interrelationships among the government, non-profit, and corporate sectors in the context of South African sport present numerous prospects, yet also carry the risk of potential conflicts that can be effectively addressed through the adoption of a digital marketing framework to enhance communication, improve collaboration and encourage alignment between these sectors. Through the utilisation of digital functionalities and tactics specifically designed to accommodate the unique dynamics and requirements of the sport industry in South Africa, such a framework has the potential to improve the overall effectiveness of these sectors. By doing so, it might facilitate the development of sport by promoting growth, inclusivity and sustainability.

Having examined the environment, the sport industry operates in, the next section concerns the factors influencing the sport industry, which further contextualise the development of a framework for sport marketing.

2.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING SPORT MARKETING

The landscape of the sport industry is continuously shaped by a complex set of factors. Specifically, the diverse sport environment, which encompasses a wide variety of activities, audiences and stakeholders, necessitates customised marketing and engagement strategies. The emergence of new technology has significantly altered the way sport is consumed and promoted, introducing novel channels for stakeholder interaction and data-driven marketing strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic was a game-changer, accelerating digital trends and introducing new challenges and opportunities. Together, these factors produce a dynamic and multifaceted industry in which adaptability, understanding of diverse needs and the strategic application of technology are essential for success. These influences are relevant to the study, as they emphasise the importance of a comprehensive understanding of the current sport marketing environment. They also highlight the need for a distinct sport marketing framework capable of adapting to the unpredictable nature of sport, fostering emotional connections, building communities, and effectively managing intricate branding across diverse digital platforms. Gaining insight into these influences facilitates the development of improved marketing strategies that are adaptable to the ever-evolving demands of the sport industry.

2.5.1 The influence of the diversity of the sport environment on sport marketing

Sport marketing is a distinctive field that connects the love of sport with the fundamentals of marketing. In contrast to conventional goods and services, the unique characteristics of sport make its marketing different, which is why some traditional marketing strategies might not be effective for sport marketing (Evans *et al.*, 2022:2-4). This means sport marketers need to be agile and innovative, adapting their strategies to the latest trends and technologies on a regular basis.

The outcome of a sporting event is unpredictable and, as a result, stakeholder's emotions and levels of excitement and engagement can fluctuate (Melton & MacCharles, 2021:22-25; Simmons *et al.*, 2023:92-97). A framework for digital marketing in sport must account for this variability and include strategies that can maintain engagement regardless of performance.

Sport stakeholders are not merely consumers; they are emotionally invested in their favourite sport. They desire a deep and interactive connection with the sport organisation they support. Such high levels of emotional engagement should be accommodated in the digital marketing framework (Melton & MacCharles, 2021:22-25; Simmons *et al.*, 2023:92-97).

The communal nature of in-person and digital sport consumption necessitates marketing strategies that encourage community building and active stakeholder participation. Traditional digital marketing might place a greater emphasis on the individual consumer experience at the expense of community building (Evans *et al.*, 2022:2-4; Fischer, 2019:11-25).

Sport organisations must manage their relationships with a variety of stakeholders, including participants, players, sponsors, media partners and community members. Each group has unique interests and requirements, and a one-size-fits-all marketing strategy might not be able to meet *all* these varying demands (Evans *et al.*, 2022:4-6).

In sport, the brand is about the team, the players, the history, the culture and the stakeholder community, not just a logo or a tagline (Fischer, 2019:11-25). Using a generic digital marketing framework, it can be challenging to maintain a consistent and engaging brand narrative across multiple digital channels, each with its own unique user behaviours and expectations.

Given these unique characteristics, sport marketing requires a customised framework that can adapt to the unpredictability of sport, foster emotional connections, build communities, accommodate a variety of stakeholders and manage complex branding across multiple digital channels. Such a framework would likely place an emphasis on engagement, storytelling, real-time marketing, personalisation, co-creation of content, leveraging player influence and

strategically utilising data and analytics to comprehend and accommodate behaviours and preferences.

2.5.2 Influence of new technology on sport marketing

The new technology that gave rise to the digital age has influenced the way sport organisations promote their products and how they communicate with their stakeholders. It is especially with regards to mobile technology in the form of smart phones, emails, SMSs and WhatsApp that the sport organisation has to adapt a new approach to sport marketing and a new understanding of the sport stakeholders' behaviour (Ennis, 2020:295; Godin, 2018:12).

The internet and online social channels place the sport consumer at the centre of a digital ecosystem which involves the athletes, the clubs, the sport organisations, the media and the sport stadiums and fields. A study in 2020 by the Capgemini Research Institute, involving more than 10,000 sport fans, participants, industry experts and athletes in nine countries, found that technology was now an integral part of the way stakeholders consumed sport and that nearly 70% said that emerging technologies had enhanced their overall viewing experience, both inside and outside the stadium. Of significance is that the digitisation of sport and the stakeholder experience can strengthen engagement, build brand value and create new growth opportunities. A total of 56% of the stakeholders indicated that if they enjoyed their technological experience, they would attend more matches, while 92% would spend more on online subscriptions (Capgemini Research Institute, 2020). The expectation for stakeholders is, thus, that offline events should have some sort of digital twin and be augmented by technology in some way to interact, modify and produce content, and thereby act as co-producers of the sporting experience (Ennis, 2020:297; Melling, 2020).

The results of the study conducted by the Capgemini Research Institute emphasise the significant influence of the internet, online social platforms, and emerging technologies on the sport industry, specifically in relation to consumer involvement and the overall viewing experience. This transformation places the sports consumer at the centre of a digital ecosystem that not only includes traditional components like athletes, clubs, and venues, but also includes digital interactions and content creation. The findings indicate that the future of sport marketing hinges on the smooth integration of digital and physical experiences, the use of technology to enhance engagement, and the involvement of stakeholders as co-creators in the storytelling of sport. Marketers must demonstrate flexibility and creativity, leveraging digital resources to build communities, enhance brand loyalty, and drive growth in an ever-evolving digital sport market.

This is affirmed by Beech and Chadwick (2013:299) who indicate that these new technological innovations have transformed sport from being an event that must be seen to an event that must be experienced. These experiences are in the form of stakeholders creating content, also known as “user generated content” (UGC) (see paragraph 3.3.2.3), sharing it with a community and networking among themselves and with a brand, a product, teams and athletes. Sport marketing is, thus, no longer in the domain of transactional marketing but in the scope of interactivity, engagement and experiential marketing, usually as part of a shared-interest community (see paragraph 3.2.1). Typically, their experience is not limited to match day, but it can be created whenever they want to do so (Beech & Chadwick, 2013:299; Hassan, 2018:630; Melling, 2020). The downside of this is that it could have an influence on ticket sales and the number of spectators attending big sport events such as test matches.

In putting it into practice, the technology-driven digital sport experience is illustrated below by means of an example of a T20 cricket match between South Africa and Australia, with a timeline of activities before, during and after the event.

- Three days before the match, intrigued by the history of cricket, the fan actively contributes to writing an article on Wikipedia on the subject.
- Two days before the match, in a specialist discussion forum, the fan reads and comments on the key issues of the coming match.
- The night before the match, the fan places a bet on an online betting site.
- On match day he updates his Facebook status, sends a pin-drop of his seat location in the stadium with a few photographs to a WhatsApp group and congratulates the captain of the South African team on his Twitter account for scoring a century. He also orders a beer on the Castel supporters club app.
- Back home, the fan discusses the match on a forum, watches the fours and sixes again on YouTube, shares photographs and videos on Facebook and posts an Instagram story.
- The day after the match, he reads the online sport reports on News 24 and blog articles.
- In the following days, he visits the Australian team’s website to look for some online purchases.

Nalbant and Aydın (2022:137) indicate that new technology has also opened the door for sport organisations to use AI to implement data-driven strategies to analyse and quantify the value of

downloads on apps on mobile devices, tweets on Twitter, likes on Facebook and so on. The incorporation of AI into digital sport marketing represents a paradigm shift, opening new opportunities for fan engagement, personalisation, efficiency and innovation. It provides the ability to be more responsive and data-driven, thereby enhancing the efficacy of marketing strategies and contributing to the growth and success of the sport industry (Naraine & Wanless, 2020:50).

Consequently, marketing campaigns are more targeted than ever and sport marketers are faced with more and fierce competition in competing for the attention of new stakeholders to help them make informed decisions.

What the above illustration implies for the sport organisation is that they are no longer the sole custodians of its digital existence. This point will be further elaborated upon in the next section, which deals with the COVID-19 pandemic. By digitalising their experience, stakeholders extend their areas of involvement further than just the visit to stadium or participating in an event, and are now co-producers of the sporting organisation's digital presence.

2.5.3 Influence of COVID-19 and its aftermath on sport marketing

The most popular sport that were worst-hit in South Africa by COVID-19 experienced an unprecedented crisis (Deloitte, 2020). Sport events such as the Comrades Marathon and Iron Man SA, and the organisers of team sport such as rugby and cricket, suffered from plummeting revenues, while the whole sport sector in the country was exposed to the threat of sponsorship money drying up (Blasingame, 2010). The effect of the pandemic also filtered through to the sport sector's governing bodies, competition organisers, clubs, owners/investors, broadcasters, sponsors, and suppliers (Deloitte, 2020). Many millions of jobs were at risk, not only for sport professionals but also for those in related retail and sporting services and industries connected to leagues and events. The industries affected included travel, tourism, infrastructure, transportation, catering and media broadcasting, among others. Professional athletes had to reschedule their training, while trying to stay fit at home, and ran the risk of losing professional sponsors because they could not deliver on their contracts or arrangements (Ennis, 2020:295).

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) on the entertainment and media industry from 2021 to 2025 found that South Africans spent more on digital entertainment in the first quarter of 2021 and that data usage in 2020 was almost 33% higher than in 2019. This was attributed to people working and spending more time at home because of COVID-19. Furthermore, South African consumers in 2020 under the various levels of lockdown spent 5,6% more on digital media and entertainment than in 2019. PWC estimated that this number increased to 9,8% in 2021 because of changing consumer behaviour caused by the pandemic. South Africans turned to digital

entertainment in the form of livestreaming sport events because they were spending more time at home (United Nations, 2020; Vicki, 2018).

The disruption caused by COVID-19 prompted the rethink and transformation of the sporting experience and opened new opportunities for how sport could be marketed and how to get the attention of the many stakeholders (Ennis, 2020:296). New and unique content was developed for rights holders and broadcasters to keep stakeholders engaged, especially on social media channels. Organisers of sport entities such as rugby, cricket and soccer, taking health and safety regulations into consideration, staged events and games “behind closed doors” or in the so-called “bio-bubble”. These bio-bubbles were strictly controlled bio-secure environments with no spectators, where the players, staff, management and even the broadcasting team and media persons were regularly monitored for COVID-19 infections. For the duration of the event, nobody could enter the stadium and if someone had to leave the venue, they needed to isolate for five days and pass two COVID-19 tests before returning to the squad (Business Standard, 2020).

To engage with viewers, cardboard faces of fans were placed on the seats. When a goal was scored, loud music would be played. Some also introduced fan noises, such as cheering and clapping. Appearances by sport personalities were transformed into digital presentations through virtual hangouts, video messages or even playing video games together with fans. Stadiums were no longer filled with supporters, but with live streams of fans in the comfort of their homes. The Comrades Marathon Association presented their centenary run of the race as a virtual event. The participants could enter for a chosen distance and would still receive a unique medal and could buy memorabilia (Blasingame, 2010; Louw, 2021; United Nations, 2020).

The “new normal” created by the Coronavirus crisis undoubtedly affected the attendance at games and events; thus, sport marketers and organisations had to learn to become more agile, responsive and creative if they wanted to succeed. The challenge was to keep the audience interested and involved during the streaming of games and events, and posts on social media channels, which required a strategy of providing interactivity, and an experience in the form of quality content and community engagement.

The relevance of these influences to the research extends beyond mere observation. They are fundamental components determining of how creative, adaptable, and technologically advanced marketing strategies are developed. In addressing these influences, the study seeks to offer a framework that can assist sport organisations in formulating marketing strategies that are not only effective in the present environment, but also able to withstand and adapt to future changes and challenges in the sport industry.

The factors that influence sport marketing present both challenges and opportunities in effectively engaging with sport stakeholders. To navigate these complexities, the 3 Pillars of sport marketing will be explored. This will indicate how the unique emotional bonds created by sport are utilised to engage and connect with stakeholders.

2.5.4 The 3 Pillars of sport marketing

Sport marketing in South Africa requires a flexible and diverse strategy to address the distinct challenges and possibilities presented in the sport sector. This strategy is divided into three key pillars: marketing of sport, marketing through sport and marketing by sport (Mullin 2014:13; Ratten, 2016:163). Each one of these pillars impacts the sport industry by strengthening its economic sustainability, broadening its scope, and intensifying stakeholder engagement (Hums *et al.*, 2023). Collectively, they create a symbiotic relationship between sport and marketing by driving growth, increasing engagement and expanding the sport industry, emphasising the essential role of focused marketing initiatives in guaranteeing the health and development of sport in South Africa.

The interplay between these three pillars distinguishes sport marketing from marketing in other industries, as it represents an inherent emotional connection with sport stakeholders. This emotional commitment not only enhances the impact of marketing initiatives but also allows for a flexible marketing approach that is able to promote the sport itself, utilise the sport as a platform to market unrelated products, and capitalise on the sport's brand to sell associated products or services (Hassan, 2018: 45). Sport marketing leverages the enthusiastic involvement of stakeholders, making it a potent and dynamic field that goes beyond conventional marketing strategies to establish profound and enduring connections with stakeholders.

The marketing of sport: The marketing of sport involves the application of general marketing principles to sport-related products and services. This aspect of sport marketing promotes major sporting events like the Olympic Games, Rugby World Cup, marathons, professional competitions, and local clubs (Mullin 2014:13; Ratten, 2016:163; Parent & Smith-Swan, 2013:97). Typical efforts include team advertising, athlete publicity stunts, season ticket sales, and licenced merchandise. It also includes the marketing of sporting goods and apparel, spectator sport, and participation sport venues (Ratten, 2016:163; Shilbury, *et al.*, 2014: 15; Smit, 2008:7). This marketing leg aids the promotion of sport events and encourages participation on all levels, which is vital to sport survival and growth. The marketing-of-sport strategy directly targets stakeholders, keeping the sport relevant in a competitive entertainment landscape.

Marketing through sport: Marketing through sport diverges from marketing of sport by utilising sport events, athletes, teams, or leagues to promote non-sport products and services (Fullerton, 2010:2; Mihai, 2013:231; Ratten, 2016: 163; Smit, 2008:7). Professional athletes endorsing commercial products or corporations sponsoring sport events use sport popularity and emotional connection to market unrelated products. Such marketing often involves corporate or professional sport, the government, and non-profit sectors, especially for major events and sponsorships (Fullerton, 2010:2). This method leverages the broad appeal and visibility of sport to enhance brand recognition and consumer engagement for non-sport products. It demonstrates the versatility and reach of sport as a marketing platform. Targeted, interactive campaigns that enhance brand loyalty and consumer relationships are enhanced by the digital environment.

Marketing by sport: Marketing by sport is essentially the marketing of sport to encourage participation and uses the marketing mix to promote sport participation and spectatorship by highlighting their benefits (Mullin 2014:13; Ratten, 2016:163). It adapts to environmental changes and maintains or increases participation to sustain sport. National sporting organisations and sport-governing bodies promote grassroots involvement and make sport an appealing form of live entertainment to attract future athletes (Mihai, 2013:231; Mullin 2014:13). Marketing plays a key role in sustaining and expanding sport interest, especially through community and youth engagement programmes. It emphasises the importance of inclusive marketing strategies to promote a vibrant sporting culture by showing the importance of participation in sport.

2.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 provided a detailed overview of the sport industry in South Africa, including its governance, organisation, and the various sectors that influence sport marketing dynamics. The investigation thereof has demonstrated the significant influence of historical legacies, governance structures, technological advancements, and exceptional challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic on sport marketing strategies in South Africa. The analysis of the interrelationships between the government, non-profit, and corporate sectors has highlighted the complex nature of and unique possibilities for sport marketing. Sport marketing functions beneath an umbrella of three pillars: marketing of sport, marketing through sport and marketing by sport. Each pillar plays an integral part in utilising the distinctive characteristics of sport to effectively engage and connect with stakeholders. The aim of this chapter was to answer the first specific research question:

What factors influence sport marketing in South Africa, according to the literature?

Sport in South Africa has come a long way and the country has a rich sporting history, with victories in several rugby world cups, gold medals in the Olympic Games and the hosting of

international events such as the Soccer World Cup, the Cricket World Cup, Rugby World Cup and Netball World Cup. Moreover, South Africa also hosts world famous events that attract international participation, such as the Comrades Marathon, the Cape Cycle Tour and the Midmar Mile, to name a few (see paragraph 2.4.1.2). To ensure that sport is effectively controlled and coordinated in South Africa, it is regulated by the national government department, that is SRSA, together with SASCOC, SAIDS and WADA (see paragraph 2.3).

Sport is also an industry and a special form of business with a unique marketplace, which includes all the suppliers of sport products and services, and sport itself is a product that satisfies the needs of its stakeholders. Due to the diverse features of the sport industry, it is divided into three sectors, namely the government, non-profit and corporate sectors. Although these sectors are independent of each other, they are not standalone entities, but are interconnected. The relationships that exist among the government, non-profit, and corporate sectors provide for many stakeholders, yet also entail possible issues that can be effectively addressed through the enactment of a digital marketing framework.

These interrelated factors have far-reaching consequences for digital marketing, which enables one to specifically target the characteristics and goals of each dimension. As a result, it is possible to reach a target audience wherever they are in the world and tailor one's interactions with stakeholders based on real-time data. Because the lines between corporate, and community sport continue to blur in the modern era, a unified, flexible approach to marketing is essential. To facilitate effective integration and cooperation among the various sport sectors, it is necessary to implement an innovative and adaptable digital marketing framework that takes these factors into account.

New technology and the COVID-19 pandemic had a direct influence on the South African sporting landscape. New technology has empowered the stakeholder to be more involved in the marketing process through interactivity, engagement and conversations, which should be the focus of a digital sport marketing strategy. Sport marketing is, therefore, no longer in the domain of transactional marketing, but in the scope of engagement, relational marketing and experiential marketing as part of a shared interest community (see paragraph 2.6).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major influence on sport and how it should be marketed in the post-pandemic environment (see paragraph 2.7). Although digital technology can provide a sporting experience, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced sport organisations to be even more innovative. With sport being played in empty stadiums, supporters watched their favourite sport by livestreaming in the comfort of their homes, big events were transformed into virtual events and appearances by sport personalities were turned into webinars and digital presentations. The

sport organisation should, thus, be more agile, responsive and creative in the “new normal” that was created by the Coronavirus crisis.

It was argued that sport is unique because of the interconnectedness of the three sectors in which sport are organised and where marketing takes place, which are impacted by the new technology, the COVID-19 pandemic and the distinctive nature of sport, which gives rise to the following specific guiding argument number 1:

The literature showed that some of the aspects that influence sport marketing in South Africa are the fact that the sport sector forms part of the government, non-profit and the corporate sectors, as well as the diverse sport environment. Sport has also experienced a significant transformation due to new technology and the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the literature offers valuable insights into various aspects of digital sport marketing, it is important to recognise that these aspects form part of a complex landscape. The unique nature of sport marketing, compared to other industries, stems from factors such as the unpredictability of sport events, fan engagement, the emotional connection and interaction with stakeholders, the complexity of branding and the distinctive marketplace of sport, which includes the suppliers of sport products and services that utilise sport to promote and sell their offerings.

In this chapter, the focus has been on providing a contextual background for the research by focusing on sport marketing in South Africa. By understanding the context unique to South Africa, will assist in creating a digital sport marketing framework for sport marketing. Considering how digital marketing is always changing and how complicated and interconnected sport are, such a framework will provide a full understanding of all the parts and strategies involved. This will give sport marketers the guidance they need to navigate the digital landscape and change their strategies to meet the changing needs and goals of the various people involved in sport.

It will, thus, be meaningful to investigate marketing in the digital environment, specifically relationship marketing and stakeholder engagement, which will serve as elements in a framework for sport marketers. Chapter 3 constitutes a discussion of how marketing has evolved in the digital environment and how traditional concepts such as segmentation, targeting and positioning, and the four Ps of marketing have advanced in the digital age. This will introduce the concept of stakeholder centricity, interactivity and engagement, personalisation, customisation and community building, with the stakeholder forming the centre of the marketing strategy to build stakeholder relationships.

CHAPTER 3 UTILISING DIGITAL MARKETING IN RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH SPORT STAKEHOLDERS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, aspects of the context of sport that influence sport marketing in South Africa were described, as indicated by the literature. Moreover, there are several factors influencing sport, which makes it different from other industries. Firstly, sport is distinctive because of live events, of which the outcomes cannot be predicted, necessitating the sharing of a sport experience that has value for stakeholders. Secondly, new technology has changed the way sport stakeholders and supporters consume their sport. Thirdly, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced professional sport franchises to divert to unique and innovative forms of marketing which are unique to their industry (see paragraph 2.5).

Considering the various factors that impact sport marketing, the focus will now be redirected to exploring the ways in which digital marketing can be effectively utilised in the marketing of sport. Sport' multifaceted nature in the digital age are acknowledged. The chapter is thus used to indicate the answer to the study's second research question:

What principles of digital marketing are effective in building relationships, according to the literature?

This chapter will indicate the fundamentals that make sport unique in digital marketing: experiential value, human engagement, and brand-audience identity connections. Sport' natural ability to tell emotionally charged stories which is a key element of effective digital communication will also be examined. It will be argued that the sport sectors should, therefore, focus their marketing efforts on relationship building by interacting and engaging with stakeholders, which calls for a two-way communication process. The stakeholder should be central in the digital marketing strategy. This will provide for an in-depth understanding of digital marketing strategies in sport, setting the stage for a comprehensive exploration of how digital tools and platforms can improve the sporting experience, and business outcomes in this digitally evolving arena.

This chapter therefore provides an examination of the fundamental principles of digital marketing, establishing the foundation for a comprehensive digital marketing framework specifically designed for sport marketers. This deeper understanding enables sport marketers to efficiently utilise digital

marketing tactics, guaranteeing a thorough promotion of both the sport itself and associated or sponsored goods and services within the ever-changing sport environment.

Where marketing was traditionally the responsibility of the organisation and, in the context of sport, the sport sectors and the three pillars of sport, the stakeholder now has a bigger say in marketing. These new marketing concepts have also resulted in new perspectives, such as the stakeholder journey, stakeholder experience, content marketing and user generated content (UGC).

To lay the foundation for the study, the following section will provide a historical perspective and the shift towards relationship marketing, which signifies a transition from transactional marketing tactics to building relationships, making it a strategic tool in modern marketing.

3.2 THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The term “relationship marketing” (RM) surfaced during the 1990s, marking a significant shift in marketing dynamics from transactional to relational exchange. This era observed a growing acceptance of RM as the limitations of one-way communication with stakeholders became increasingly evident. The traditional approach of organisations setting the agenda was no longer sufficient because consumers demanded more engagement and participation. Consequently, in the new millennium, the focus of marketing evolved towards a more interactive dialogue with consumers rather than merely directing messages at them, signifying the rise of RM as a key marketing paradigm (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013; Mulder, 2015:2-4; Wongkitrungrueng *et al.*, 2020:491).

Prior to the Industrial Revolution (1760 to 1840), the commercial landscape was dominated by relational exchanges, with direct trade relationships existing between producers and end users, who simultaneously served as manufacturers and retailers. These dealings were grounded in trust and established norms borne out of close connections between producers and consumers (Gummerus *et al.*, 2017:451; Malhotra *et al.*, 2016:26).

However, the advent of the Industrial Revolution brought about mass production and consumption, instigating a shift towards transactional marketing. This period witnessed the emergence of intermediaries, causing a division between producers and consumers or stakeholders (Christian *et al.*, 2017:58). As these middlemen were merely agents, they lacked emotional attachment to the products and were not involved in their physical production process. This detachment, coupled with their role as intermediaries, led to an inevitable shift, whereby transactions became the focal point of exchanges (Christian *et al.*, 2017:58; Malhotra *et al.*,

2016:26). Thus, although the terminology and managerial focus of RM might seem like a new phenomenon that emerged in the 1990s or the new millennium – drawing upon insights from the fields of service and industrial marketing – its application and significance in business can be traced back to pre-industrial times. Hence, even though the industrial revolution necessitated a shift to transactional marketing, the importance of relationships in marketing has never been entirely lost (Boshoff, 2014:344; Cosic & Djuric, 2010; Grönroos, 2008:325; Sweidan *et al.*, 2012). Several factors contributed to the development of RM.

These included the fact that it was more costly to attract new stakeholders than to retain an existing stakeholder; thus, the lifetime value of stakeholders became important to marketers (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013:212; Malhotra *et al.*, 2016:26; Mulder, 2015:4). According to Lamb *et al.* (2019), retaining a stakeholder, costs about a quarter of what one would spend to attract a new one. Moreover, retaining an existing stakeholder is more than 60% easier than attracting a new one, which is less than 30%. Therefore, on the one hand, organisations benefit from repeat sales, which can be credited to stakeholder loyalty and referrals, leading to increased profit for the organisation. On the other hand, costs fall, which is to the benefit of the stakeholders, because the organisation can offer less expensive products.

Furthermore, Mulder (2015), reasons that the advancement of new technology has caused marketers to realise that they need more than just a onetime exchange or transaction with stakeholders, which has led to a new and greater emphasis on RM. This emphasis involves creating, maintaining and enhancing long-term relationships with stakeholders for mutual benefit. A greater emphasis has, thus, been placed on feedback and two-way communication, which represents a move away from transactional marketing towards interactive marketing (Angelopulo & Barker, 2013:212; Gummerus *et al.*, 2017:452). The shift to RM gained further momentum when organisations realised that the stakeholder wanted personalised information about products and services, which could be tailored to their specific needs and wants.

In addition, Malhotra *et al.* (2016) point out that new technology reintroduced direct marketing and, thus, also a relationship orientation. Direct relationships between producers and consumers have immense potential for building trust, emotional bonds and commitment.

Therefore, producers and consumers were able to cooperate more and become more relationship oriented. The implication was, that with the return of producer–consumer relationships and direct marketing, the transactional exchange concept of marketing was insufficient because of increased cooperative and collaborative relationships. An alternative paradigm of marketing was, therefore, needed, namely focusing on processes and value co-creation, rather than outcomes and value distribution (Gummerus *et al.*, 2017:452). The emphasis on building long-term

relationships instead of short-term transactions, thus, called for a new marketing theory, which led to the emergence of RM (Lamb *et al.*, 2019:14). For the sport sector, this means that an overemphasis on short-term transactions, such as ticket sales or merchandise purchases, is not sufficient for sustained success. The paradigm shift towards RM, thus, calls for a re-evaluation of digital marketing in sport, integrating elements such as interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and two-way communication to create personal experiences for long-term relationships and sustainable value.

3.3 DIGITAL MARKETING PRINCIPLES FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

In the ever-changing digital environment, where the dynamics of consumer involvement and brand interaction are continuously evolving, it is essential to understand the basic concepts of digital marketing, so as to establish significant connections between sport brands and their stakeholders. This is especially relevant in the context the three pillars of sport marketing, namely the marketing of sport, marketing through sport, and marketing by sport (see paragraph 2.5.4). Each pillar provides a distinct viewpoint on how digital marketing principles can be utilised in the sport industry, showcasing the adaptability and potential of sport as a platform for comprehensive marketing strategies. This section of the study examines the fundamental elements that make up a strong digital marketing framework, with a specific emphasis on the sport industry in South Africa. The significance of these principles, namely stakeholder centricity; interactivity and engagement; personalisation and customisation; and community building lies in their capability to effectively address the particular obstacles, as described in chapter 2, faced by sport marketers in engaging digitally savvy audiences, improving brand loyalty, and fostering a sense of community.

3.3.1 Stakeholder centricity

At the core of relationship building is stakeholder centricity, which is the starting point that directs and improves the effectiveness of other marketing principles (Liu & Yin, 2020: 4). In prioritising the needs and preferences of stakeholders, every component of marketing, including interaction, engagement, personalisation, customisation and community building, works together to build strong, enduring relationships.

Emphasising stakeholder focus is crucial for creating successful sport marketing strategies. It involves understanding digital stakeholder behaviours and preferences, as well as emotional engagement in sport. This method guarantees that marketing strategies are not only in alignment with stakeholder needs and trends but are also deeply meaningful and influential, making them

essential for relationship marketing (RM) (Pardo-Jaramillo *et al.*, 2020; Hoblos, Sandeep, Pan, 2023).

The focus on stakeholder-centricity further underscores the significance of customising products, services, and digital experiences within the 3 pillars of sport marketing (see paragraph 2.5.4) to cater to the specific needs of the sport stakeholder. This customised strategy not only boosts the organisation's revenue by providing value that stakeholders are willing to pay extra for, but also enhances stakeholder loyalty by offering exceptional personalised experiences (Jun & Yi, 2020:804). To gain a competitive advantage, sport marketers in South Africa can utilise stakeholder-centricity to offer exceptional value that surpasses the expectations of sport stakeholders, thereby motivating them to engage more profoundly with the sport or team. By prioritising the stakeholder in all digital marketing efforts, sport organisations can effectively tackle the challenges presented by the ever-changing digital landscape. This approach aims to establish a comprehensive digital marketing framework that promotes meaningful relationships with stakeholders in the sport sector, which aligns with the objective of the study.

3.3.2 Interactivity, engagement and two-way communication

Interactivity, engagement and two-way communication are interrelated components of modern digital marketing; however, they possess unique characteristics. Interactivity takes place between a brand and its audience, typically facilitated through digital channels, and serves as a catalyst for fostering deep levels of audience involvement and participation. Engagement quantifies the degree of active involvement or emotional commitment from the audience, demonstrated through activities such as sharing and commenting. Two-way communication is characterised by interactive and mutually-responsive discourse between the brand and its audience. The three concepts are, thus, implemented to enhance the connection between a brand and its stakeholders. Interactivity is the initial channel, while engagement measures the extent of the connection and two-way communication ensures that the relationship is mutually advantageous and adaptable as time progresses (Abeza *et al.*, 2020; Benecke *et al.*, 2021:18; Jun & Yi, 2020:804). This dynamic has substantial implications for how sport organisations build and maintain relationships with their stakeholders.

Through interactivity, organisations can gather valuable data and insights about stakeholders. For example, they can track stakeholder behaviour on their websites, social media channels and mobile apps to understand their preferences, needs and pain points (Kang *et al.*, 2021). To this end, with the aid of AI, this information can be used to inform and improve the organisation's marketing efforts, ensuring that they are delivering the right message to the right people at the right time (see paragraph 2.5.2).

Interactivity can also lead to a personal and deep experience of a brand and the stakeholders can interact with a brand in a way that feels natural and personal. This can be achieved by using interactive communication tools such as quizzes, surveys and games, which can make the marketing experience engaging and memorable. Furthermore, brands can also use interactive content such as videos, 360-degree photographs and augmented reality to create an immersive stakeholder end-to-end experience (Liu *et al.*, 2020:784). However, it is imperative that the interactivity in digital marketing is executed in a strategic and thoughtful manner.

Within the unique context of the sport sectors, interactivity could serve as a powerful tool that goes beyond one-way communication, fostering a dynamic engagement between sporting brands and its stakeholders. Sport organisations can create personalised experiences, as well as obtaining crucial insights into stakeholder behaviour, enabling them to refine their marketing strategies. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, the significance of interactivity in digital marketing is expected to grow, highlighting the need for sport marketers to fully embrace and integrate this approach into their marketing strategies.

On the other hand, engagement is an inclusive activity in which human-centred problem-solving and collaboration are emphasised, thereby stimulating co-creation. It progresses through consistent follow-ups and feedback exchanges between organisations and stakeholders, marking the creation of a relationship (Benecke *et al.*, 2021:18; Dufvenberg, 2020). Therefore, within the sport sectors, engagement could centre on the delivery of experiences that resonate with stakeholders to encourage a dialogue in the form of face-to-face conversations or direct messages that elicit responses from stakeholders (Lamb *et al.*, 2019:411). At its core, engagement is a two-way discussion between a brand and its stakeholders (Shedrow, 2021:3), achievable through various digital functionalities such as websites, social media channels, email marketing, content marketing and online advertising. Engaging with stakeholders through these channels helps brands to build trust, cultivate brand loyalty and enhance stakeholder satisfaction (Morra *et al.*, 2022:3).

Moreover, sport stakeholders are inclined to form communities and engagement could foster a sense of community around a brand and encourage stakeholders to express their experiences and thoughts, thereby creating a sense of belonging among them (Shedrow, 2021:3). This sense of connection to the brand can boost brand loyalty because the stakeholders will be inclined to maintain the relationship (Morra *et al.*, 2022:2). Finally, it is worth noting that engagement is not a once-off event but an ongoing process. Organisations need to consistently engage with their stakeholders to sustain strong relationships and keep their audience captivated.

To summarise, interactivity refers to the stakeholder's ability to actively participate in a digital marketing experience, while engagement refers to the stakeholder's emotional investment and connection to the experience. Both interactivity and engagement enable two-way communication because they allow stakeholders to participate in content creation. They are crucial components of relationship building as part of the digital marketing strategy because they help to keep the stakeholder engaged and create a deeper connection with the brand.

In the context of the sport sector, digital marketers facilitate interactivity and engagement by listening to and understanding stakeholder's needs. To this end, it would be worthwhile to explore how to address stakeholders needs effectively in the digital world.

3.3.3 Personalisation and Customisation

Personalisation and customisation are crucial strategies for tackling the challenges posed by the rapidly changing digital landscape, in which stakeholders are inundated with excessive volumes of information and advertising communications. These strategies address the issue of information overload by customising marketing initiatives to align with the distinct preferences, behaviours, and requirements of respective stakeholders. Instead of increasing the number of touchpoints and messages, which could lead to additional saturation and disinterest, personalisation and customisation prioritise the level of quality and relevance of interactions.

By utilising data analytics and understanding stakeholder behaviour, organisations can develop marketing messages and content that deeply connect with each individual stakeholder (Carlson, 2024). Personalisation, on the one hand, involves modifying the content of messages to align with the stakeholder's interests, previous actions, or demographic information (Muhammad, 2024). Customisation, on the other hand, takes an additional step by enabling stakeholders to make changes to their experiences or the products themselves, based on their preferences (Chandra *et al.*, 2022:3; Nobile & Cantoni, 2023:2). This strategy not only assists in the elimination of the distractions of generic advertising but also cultivates a more profound bond between brands and their stakeholders. Examples include targeted emails, custom video messages, product recommendations, social media, fear of missing out (FOMOP), and location-based marketing or geotargeting (Chandra *et al.*, 2022: 4).

The phrase "less might be more" gains significance and relevance in light of the above. Sport organisations can optimise their marketing resources by prioritising personalised and customised interactions, enabling them to create significant and influential experiences for their stakeholders (see paragraph 3.3.2). Digital marketing is, therefore, strategically moving away from mass marketing strategies and towards a more stakeholder-centric approach, as discussed in

paragraph 3.3.1. This statement highlights the significance of understanding and dealing with the distinct requirements and preferences of sport stakeholders, thereby improving their involvement, commitment and, ultimately, their impact in the digital environment.

The complexities of the stakeholder journey, stakeholder experience, and content marketing are closely connected to the principles of personalisation and customisation, indicating a notable transition towards more focused and impactful digital marketing strategies. The stakeholder journey breaks down the stages that individuals undergo from initial brand awareness to becoming enthusiastic advocates, offering a structured framework for tailored interactions (Marvian, 2017). The stakeholder experience is further enhanced by prioritising the quality of every interaction, highlighting the positive impact that personalised and customised touchpoints can have on the overall perception of the brand. Meanwhile, content marketing serves as the medium for delivering this customised content, guaranteeing that every piece of information a stakeholder receives is pertinent and captivating. The following section explores the merger of these components to create an effective strategy for digital marketing, utilising personalisation and customisation to establish stronger relationships and enhance interaction in a crowded online environment.

3.3.4 The stakeholder journey

The stakeholder journey, as Marvian (2017) defines it, captures the full range of experiences stakeholders have when engaging with brands. This is not just a fragment of a transaction or isolated experience; it is the comprehensive perspective of being a stakeholder.

Historically, the AIDA model (attention, interest, desire, action) developed by E. St. Elmo Lewis in 1898 provided a foundational roadmap for the stakeholder journey, aiding in crafting advertising copy and sales pitches. However, akin to the evolution of the four Ps of marketing, this model has undergone several iterations, introducing frameworks such as Derek Rucker's four As – aware, attitude, act and act again (Hadiyati, 2016:51).

Despite these developments, the element of interactivity and engagement (see paragraph 3.3.2) – the crucial aspects in the current era of stakeholder behaviour – are overlooked in traditional models such as the AIDA model. As argued in section 3.2.2 above, stakeholders today yearn for engagement, are influenced by their communities and participate in reciprocal relationships. Their journey continues past the point of purchase, underscoring the importance of post-purchase interactions in retaining stakeholders.

In an era in which stakeholders share their experiences and initiate conversations, creating advocates from communities has become a new form of promotion. Hence, the goal is to transform stakeholders into loyal advocates (Maechler *et al.*, 2016; Marvian, 2017; Yuzdepski, 2022). It has now become essential to integrate such modern marketing practices into the sport sector's strategies, emphasising interactivity, engagement and two-way conversations.

Figure 3.1 below illustrates the role of the stakeholder in the modern stakeholder journey in five phases, namely interest, search, research, conversion and advocacy.

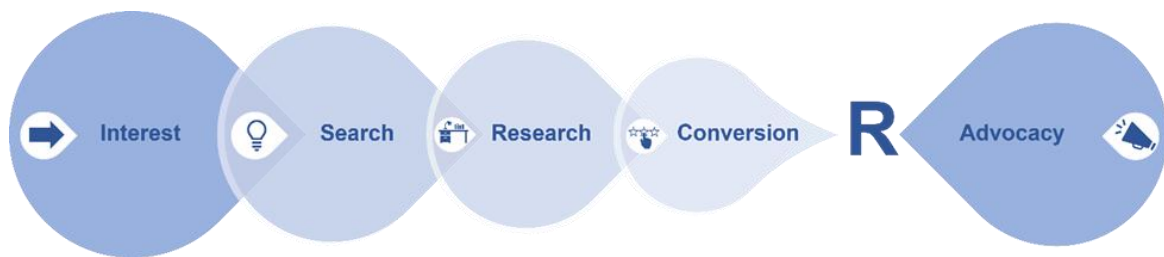


Figure 3-1: The modern stakeholder journey (adapted from Vendasta 2018)

The modern stakeholder journey, with its five crucial stages, provides a comprehensive understanding of the stakeholder's role.

Interest and Awareness: This initial stage sparks a potential or recurring purchase and acts as the gateway to the entire stakeholder journey. With stakeholders exposed to brands through various sources, such as experience, marketing communication and advocacy, the traditional path would have stakeholders attracted by an advertisement, leading to a purchase and further discussions (Hadiyati, 2016:51; Kotler *et al.*, 2017:62; Nobel, 2010:5). However, in today's era, empowered by Google and other information resources, stakeholders wield stronger purchasing power. They engage in a “zero moment of truth”, researching and comparing options before making a purchase. Consequently, sport organisations must focus on an online presence featuring beneficial and unique content.

Search and Findability: Once aware of sport brands, stakeholders actively seek more information. With the ease of access provided by Google and other search engines, stakeholders can find precise information exactly when they need it. It is crucial for sport organisations to maintain a presence across popular channels, especially social media, where stakeholders can consult with like-minded communities. Thus, the stakeholder journey transforms from an individual to a social one.

Research and Reputation: After gaining awareness of various sport brands and their benefits, stakeholders shortlist appealing ones and delve into deeper research. Feedback from other consumers plays a pivotal role in the decision-making process (Yuzdepski, 2022). Therefore, sport brands must strive to innovate, outshine competitors and manage their reputations effectively.

Conversion and Purchase: Stakeholders will act, usually by purchasing, if the gathered information and feedback convince them. However, stakeholder actions extend beyond just buying; they include post-purchase interactions, consumption, usage and after-sales services. This underscores the shift from transactional to interactive marketing, with an emphasis on relationship building, stakeholder care and two-way communication.

Advocacy: The final phase sees stakeholders exhibiting loyalty and advocacy for the brand. An advocate, quite often, shares positive experiences and recommendations spontaneously, making advocacy a key aspect of a sport organisation's digital marketing strategy. However, some loyal advocates might be passive and require a prompt to share their experiences. Advocacy can be directly linked to stakeholder centricity as discussed in paragraph 3.3.1.

The modern stakeholder journey, however, is not rigid. Stakeholders might not navigate all stages and some actions could be impulsive or based solely on initial awareness and reputation (Godin, 2018:12; Schaefer, 2019:18-27). Moreover, not all advocates will be actual buyers but could recommend a sport brand based on other advocates' experiences (Nobel, 2010:5; Yuzdepski, 2022).

The focus above was on the stakeholder's role in the digital realm and their interaction with sport organisations, fostering loyal relationships. In today's digital age, stakeholders develop an interest in or awareness of a product or brand primarily due to its engaging online presence. However, decisions are not based solely on online research, but also hinge on conversations within communities. It is, thus, crucial for the sport sectors to not just be discoverable via search engines but also to maintain a vibrant presence on social channels to participate in these online discussions. Strong relationships can be formed through personalised experiences and customisation by interactive engagement and exceptional stakeholder care. These stakeholders often reciprocate by sharing their experiences on social media, making recommendations and narrating positive stories about the brand.

Thus, the stakeholder journey is more than just making a sale; it encapsulates the complete stakeholder experience, from initial awareness to purchase and even beyond, transforming them into loyal advocates emphasising the importance of personalised and customised experiences.

During this journey, stakeholders' purchase behaviour is significantly influenced by their interactions and experiences with the sport sector which should be established through the 3 pillars of sport marketing (see paragraph 2.5.4).

3.3.5 The stakeholder experience

While the journey of a sport stakeholder might be seen as a unique, personalised and customised experience within the stakeholder lifecycle, the act of purchasing a sport product as a touchpoint within this journey should be identified (Stanley & Plotkin, 2015). A touchpoint occurs whenever a potential stakeholder comes across the sport organisation's brand, be it before, during or after a purchase, or when visiting their website, a post on social media or an online advertisement (Maechler *et al.*, 2016).

The stakeholder experience is the broader perception that stakeholders form about a brand and occurs because of those touchpoints. It includes not only what happens during each interaction, but also the emotional and psychological impact these interactions have on the stakeholder's overall reaction to the brand (Stanley & Plotkin, 2015). Thus, a successful stakeholder experience can be viewed as the sum of well-executed touchpoints that align to create a coherent and engaging journey for the stakeholder. In essence, while touchpoints are the individual steps in a journey, the stakeholder experience is the journey itself.

Historically, organisations emphasised touchpoints to maximise stakeholder satisfaction. However, McKinsey and Company (2016) indicate that organisations' siloed focus on individual touchpoints overlooks the broader perspective of the stakeholder's end-to-end experience. It has been found that organisations which consider the stakeholder experience from the stakeholder's viewpoint along the entire journey, are more successful in improving performance and generate more revenue (Maechler *et al.*, 2016). This perspective is particularly relevant in today's sport consumer markets, which are characterised by multiple points of contact, various channels, constant connectivity and intense competition.

Therefore, the focus shifts from *mere satisfaction* to what *leads to satisfaction*: the end-to-end stakeholder experience. Despite having strong overall stakeholder satisfaction metrics, stakeholders could still gravitate towards competitors if service delivery is poor and staff treatment is substandard over time. Merely reacting to stakeholders as they make purchasing decisions is insufficient; sport organisations should proactively shape these decision journeys by prioritising stakeholder needs (Sorman, 2019; Wereda & Grzybowska, 2016:200). Hence, as argued in section 3.3.1 above, sport organisations should adopt a stakeholder-centric approach.

Moreover, Edelman and Singer (2015) suggest that customer experience (CX) could deliver value to both the stakeholder and the organisation. If successful, CX could minimise the search and research phases, or even eliminate them during the purchase process and propel a consumer directly to the advocacy phase of the relationship. Sport organisations providing the best personalised and customised experience from the journey's start to finish can anticipate enhanced stakeholder satisfaction, improved sales, retention, reduced end-to-end service cost and improved employee satisfaction (Maechler *et al.*, 2016:2; Stanley & Plotkin, 2015:1). Thus, CX is becoming a defining source of competitive advantage.

3.3.6 Content marketing

Content marketing can be described as brand journalism, which is a powerful means for building bridges between organisations and their stakeholders and is about generating attention and creating a strong brand identity through the consistent delivery of relevant personalised and customised multimedia content, hence the specific focus is on the stakeholder (see paragraph 3.3.1). The key is to provide an experience and to inform, not sell, making content marketing a potent force in the contemporary marketing landscape (Chaffey & Smith, 2022:25; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019; McCoy, 2017).

Content is also a product, requiring deliberate design, planning and testing (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). As with any tangible product, content should be built with a clear goal in mind and presented in a way that stakeholders find appealing.

In the world of sport marketing and therefore, referring to the 3 pillars of sport marketing, it is crucial to present content that captures the attention of the sport stakeholder. That means delivering content that is informative, entertaining and inspirational. Informative content, such as articles about the history of a sport, player profiles or statistical breakdowns of a match, is used to build authority and trust. The primary goal is to offer something that enhances the stakeholder's understanding or skills. Entertaining content such as highlight reels, or behind-the-scenes footage of a sport event captivates and retains attention. The aim is to capture attention through humour, storytelling or exciting visuals and in the process creating an experience.

Inspiring content, such as posts or articles about an athlete who succeeded despite difficult circumstances or community outreach initiatives by a sport organisation that has resulted in positive social change, is used to create strong emotional connections between the brand and its stakeholders, which could lead to higher levels of engagement and loyalty (Chaffey & Smith, 2022; Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016). For the sport sectors, the emphasis would be on supporting each

other by providing free content that informs, entertains and inspires, and which resonates with stakeholders and leads them back to the organisation's site and offerings.

However, many organisations mistake content marketing for advertising and use social media as just another broadcast medium (Kingsnorth, 2022:26; Kotler *et al.*, 2017:52). This results in the content failing to achieve its desired impact. Unlike advertisements, content should be about serving the audience's needs, sometimes even when it does not directly promote the brand or improve sales.

Consider the Comrades Marathon Association, which creates a wealth of content around its event, not just for stakeholders but also for their supporters. It offers useful information about accommodation, event history, previous winners and even road closure details. It also has an AI-powered app to keep supporters updated on race progress. This kind of content does not just inform; it creates an engaging experience that keeps stakeholders coming back for more.

In essence, content is deeply tied to the stakeholder's journey and overall personal experience. By providing exciting, relevant and timely information, the sport sectors can spark lively conversations and even co-create content with their audience which forms valuable elements for a digital marketing framework..

Closely linked to this co-creation of content is UGC, which is an effective tactic to build a sense of community among stakeholders, as well as fostering engagement and providing valuable insights regarding stakeholders' preferences and behaviours (Mayrhofer *et al.*, 2020:168). UGC happens when stakeholders share their experiences online, which other stakeholders can read. By sharing positive experiences or insights through UGC, the stakeholders essentially become advocates for the brand or product. In effect, it helps to amplify the reach of the sport marketing campaigns as the stakeholders share and spread the content within their own networks (Mahoney, 2021). However, there are also some potential downsides to UGC because it is created by the stakeholders. Sport marketers might have a challenge controlling the content, the quality and/or tone. Inappropriate UGC can harm the sport organisation's image, coupled with the risk of misinformation or rumours spreading through UGC (Bahtar & Muda, 2016:339; Mayrhofer *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, while UGC can offer significant benefits, it also requires careful management to mitigate potential risks.

Content comes in many forms and choosing the right format to connect with stakeholders is crucial. From blogs and videos to podcasts and webinars, content marketing is a vibrant, versatile tool for engaging with audiences on a deep level.

3.3.6.1 Content formats

As stated previously, content is information that people read, view or hear, and can range from technical documentation to white papers, website articles, case studies, blogs, testimonials, eBooks videos and podcasts. Table 3.3 below provides a summary of four main categories the content can be divided into.

Table 3-1: Content formats

Content formats	Description
Text	Text includes formats such as annual reports, technical documentation, research, reports, FAQs, white papers, blog postings, e-newsletters, books (both digital and printed), eBooks, magazines (both digital and printed), press releases, case studies and social media postings (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter).
Images	Images include Infographics, photographs, PowerPoint slides, drawings and illustrations.
Video	Video formats consist of interviews, how-to videos, DIY videos, TV shows and entertainment videos.
Audio	Popular audio formats are podcasts, music and sound samples

The above sections comprised an exploration of the core concepts that are integral to modern-day marketing to ensure a stakeholder-centric approach. Understanding the stakeholder journey is crucial within this alignment because it outlines the various stages a stakeholder goes through prior to, during and after making a purchase. This journey is intricately intertwined with the stakeholder experience, which indicates the stakeholder's perception and interaction with the brand or product at each stage. Content marketing thus plays a crucial role in this landscape by providing relevant and engaging content that guides and enhances the journey and experience of stakeholders. Integrating these ideas into the digital marketing strategy ensures a comprehensive approach that takes into account not only the product and price, but also the complex relationships, accessibility, communication and content that make sport organisations more appealing and responsive to their target audiences.

A final topic to be discussed is community building which is an essential aspect of relationship building and reinforces the argument of stakeholder centrality.

3.3.7 Community building

Community building in digital marketing is an active and evolving process in which organisations or companies create and nurture online communities centred around their products or services. In the context of this study, it will centre around sport as a product. The objective of community

building is to drive or increase engagement between stakeholders and the brand. It entails the active involvement, cultivation of loyalty and promotion of support among stakeholders or advocates, thereby increasing brand recognition, strengthening customer loyalty, and increasing profits (Li *et al.*, 2022:2; Liao *et al.*, 2021:3). To accomplish this, Habibi *et al.*, (2014) and Kumar *et al.*, (2023) suggest different strategic approaches, of which the main ones will be briefly discussed.

Creating online platforms: This entails developing specific online spaces where the community can come together. These spaces encompass a variety of online platforms, including forums, social media groups, brand-specific online platforms, and broader online communities (see paragraphs 3.5.4). Each platform functions as a central point for communication, enabling members to establish connections based on common interests and experiences associated with the brand.

Facilitating engagement: Brands aim to foster participation within these communities by encouraging discussions, sharing, inquiries, and feedback (see paragraph 3.3.2). Engaging with the community is essential for maintaining its liveliness and facilitating ongoing communication between the brand and its stakeholders.

Generating content: Creating and distributing content that aligns with the community's interests and requirements is a fundamental aspect of community building. The purpose of this content, whether it be articles, videos, or tutorials, is to provide information, entertainment, and engagement to community members, thereby ensuring that the brand remains prominent and relevant (see paragraph 3.3.3).

Fostering a sense of belonging: By reinforcing shared principles and identities, brands can strengthen the sense of community among their members and cultivate a sense of belonging (see paragraphs 3.3.2). Activities, events, and recognition serve as mechanisms to strengthen these communal bonds, fostering a sense of worth and connection among members.

Providing support: Providing extensive support within these communities is crucial. This involves responding to queries, resolving issues, and participating in discussions to support and educate community members, thereby enhancing their confidence in the brand.

Engaging with influencers and advocates: Utilising influencers and advocates can greatly enhance the reach and impact of a brand's message. By collaborating with these individuals, brands can strengthen their credibility and cultivate a more profound sense of trust within the community.

In the context of digital sport marketing, the approaches above play a crucial role in establishing engaging, passionate, and loyal online communities. Through the implementation of such approaches, sport organisations can establish a strong online presence that enhances the physical experience of attending games and participating in sport activities. Ultimately, this leads to increased brand awareness, stakeholder engagement, and long-term loyalty.

3.3.8 Academic review of relationship building

A comprehensive overview of the key principles and strategies for effective digital marketing and relationship building in the sport industry was provided in section 3.3. The academic articles mentioned offer an understanding of how stakeholder centricity, interactivity, engagement, personalisation, customisation, and community building comprise integral components of digital marketing strategies that contribute to effective relationship building in the sport industry. These insights offer valuable guidance for sport organisations looking to enhance their digital marketing efforts and establish meaningful connections with their stakeholders.

Based on the review of the search results provided, no major conflicting views or perspectives regarding relationship building are apparent in the academic articles. The articles largely align and complement one another, presenting as important, interconnected elements of an effective digital marketing framework. A clear consensus on the need for sport organisations to adopt a holistic, stakeholder-centric approach in order to establish meaningful and sustainable relationships with their stakeholders is observed.

While the academic articles may approach relevant topics from different angles and on varying levels of detail, they offer a comprehensive and cohesive understanding of the subject matter. No specific or additional efforts to reconcile or address are required, as no major conflicting views or perspectives are presented in the academic articles.

3.4 DIGITAL MARKETING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

The establishment of social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, as well as text messaging services such as WhatsApp and Telegram, has brought a whole new dimension to marketing; the stakeholder can decide what content he wants to receive, what content he wants to read and whether the content is authentic. Godin (2018) refers to these channels as a free media playground of conversations, in which ideas are being seen by everyone. It is, thus, apparent that sales and services are now occurring from activities and channels not associated with traditional marketing programmes and that a shift has taken place

from the organisation that do all the marketing to the stakeholder having a bigger say in marketing (see paragraph 1.1).

In the context of sport marketing as discussed in chapter 2, this shift has major implications in every facet of the 3 pillars of sport marketing. In the marketing of sport, stakeholders seek authentic and engaging content tailored to their preferences, which impacts how sport organisations present their products. In marketing through sport, the emphasis is on using digital platforms to expand promotional activities, increasing reach and engagement beyond traditional methods. Finally, in marketing by sport, the involvement and interactions of stakeholders play a crucial role in shaping brand perception and determining the level of success. The shift from organisation-driven to stakeholder-centric marketing requires a reassessment of strategies to successfully engage and satisfy the digitally empowered sport stakeholder (see paragraph 3.3.1).

In light of the above, the following section constitutes a thorough examination of the seven Cs of digital marketing specifically in the context of sport namely customer, content, context, community, convenience, cohesion and conversation.

3.4.1 The seven Cs of digital marketing

As indicated, the constantly changing digital environment requires a more tailored strategy, i.e., one that is customised to the complexities of online marketing. In order to meet this requirement, it is beneficial to examine the seven Cs of digital marketing. This model provides a precise plan for creating and executing successful digital marketing strategies. It breaks down important elements and recommended methods that are crucial for achieving success in the online world.

The seven Cs refer to the following concepts: customer, content, context, community, convenience, cohesion, and conversion (Prajapati, 2023; Ramsfield; 2023). Sport organisations have a distinct opportunity to utilise digital marketing in order to foster stronger emotional bonds with their stakeholders (see paragraph 2.5.1). The seven Cs structure offers guidance on essential elements, including understanding the sport stakeholder (customer), generating captivating content related to sport events (content), cultivating a sense of community among stakeholders (community), and optimising digital channels for ticket sales and merchandise (commerce/conversion). By integrating the seven Cs into the three pillars of sport marketing, sport marketers can successfully promote their brands, events, and products while cultivating the enthusiastic following central to the sport experience. Figure 3.2 illustrates the concepts of the seven Cs of digital marketing as described by Prajapati (2023) and Ramsfield (2023).

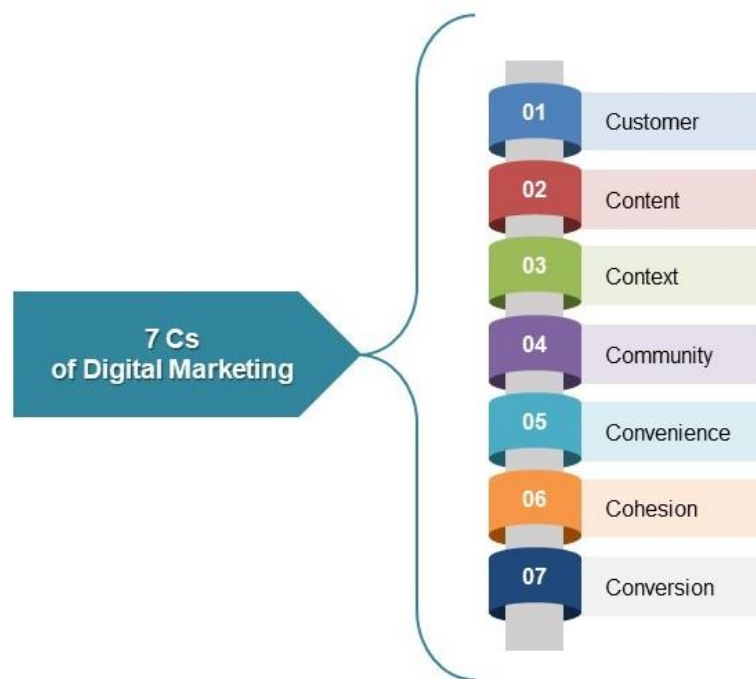


Figure 3-2: The Seven Cs of digital marketing (Authors own interpretation)

Customer: Sport stakeholders are central to all digital marketing initiatives. An in-depth analysis of stakeholders' demographics, preferences, and behaviours allows for the development of customised marketing communications. These personalised messages have a great impact, enhancing stakeholder centricity, personalisation, engagement, and community building.

Content: The foundation of digital marketing for a sport organisation lies in the content that aligns with its objectives, goals, and the intended message it seeks to communicate. High-quality, personalised content that provides education, information, and entertainment is essential, especially when it caters specifically to the interests and needs of stakeholders. The content should engage and maintain the interest of the target audience, whether it be behind-the-scenes insights, player interviews, or game highlights.

Context: It is crucial to fully understand the precise conditions in which stakeholders engage with the sport brand, e.g., the platforms they utilise, their preferred devices, and their location. Customising marketing campaigns to these specific conditions guarantees increased levels of engagement and a more robust bond with the target audience.

Community: Establishing a community centred around the sport brand is crucial for fostering a feeling of inclusion and enthusiastic engagement among stakeholders (see paragraph 3.3.7). A

lifelong community cultivates loyalty, transforming stakeholders into brand ambassadors who actively spread their passion for the sport to others.

Convenience: In this modern, fast-paced era, it is crucial for interactions with the sport organisation to be as convenient as possible. Some examples hereof include efficient online merchandise transactions, user-friendly ticket reservation systems, and websites optimised for mobile devices. All such interactions should be aimed at improving the experience and driving engagement, thereby putting the stakeholder first.

Cohesion: Consistency is crucial for a sport organisation to maintain cohesion across all digital marketing channels. Implementing a unified strategy for branding, messaging, and marketing endeavours ensures a smooth and captivating experience for stakeholders, strengthening brand identity and values.

Conversion: The primary objective of a sport organisation's digital marketing strategy is to transform stakeholders into engaged participants. This can be achieved by encouraging them to buy tickets or merchandise or participate in an event. By prioritising the task of leading stakeholders through the conversion funnel, starting from their initial awareness and ending with their final action, the organisation can optimise potential profits and ensure its financial well-being.

Integrating the insights from the seven Cs into a digital marketing framework offers a comprehensive strategy that is not only consumer-focused but also adaptable to the evolving digital landscape. This approach ensures that the specific challenges of sport marketers in South Africa – such as engaging a diverse audience, leveraging digital channels for broader reach, and creating meaningful interactions – are effectively addressed, laying the groundwork for successful digital marketing initiatives in the sport sector.

The introduction of the seven Cs makes the stakeholder therefore, a central, active partner in the sport marketing process. Greater stakeholder participation should enhance engagement and develop beneficial relationships for both the sport organisation and the stakeholder. Therefore, for brands to stay ahead, they should introduce fresh, new concepts, which fosters trust, to continue to engage and connect with the audience. Integrating this stakeholder-centric approach into the sport marketing framework is essential for developing strategies that effectively connect with and address the changing demands of the digital stakeholder in the sport industry.

3.5 THE DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY

The *organisational strategy* is the long-term course of action that will move the organisation in its strategic direction, designed to deliver a unique stakeholder journey content experience while achieving its goals (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:178; Kerin & Hartley, 2017:28-30).

All organisations set a strategic direction and marketing helps establish this path and move the organisation to get there. The *digital marketing strategy* is dependent on the organisation's overall business strategy and describes how the organisation will accomplish a particular mission or goal (Kerin & Hartley, 2017:28-30). This includes which campaigns, content, channels and marketing software it will use to execute the organisation's mission and track its success (Bakhtieva, 2017:473).

In paragraph 2.5.2, it was noted that new technologies have resulted in better-quality communication between sport organisations and their stakeholders, and that the sport sector should anticipate future events and respond quickly and rapidly to them. In the digital environment, organisations are trying to do more with less: less time, less money and fewer human resources. To this end it would be advantageous to explore how each sport sector as described in paragraph 2.4.1, should be approached by the sport marketer.

3.5.1 The four cultural repertoires

The field of digital marketing is currently experiencing an increasing degree of fragmentation, as the growing number of sub-disciplines hinders the generation of knowledge. The perceived fragmentation appears to be a natural outcome of the internet's intrinsic complexity, which is the product of its fifty years of evolution (Busca & Bertradias, 2020:1). In this regard, Busca and Bertradias (2020) developed a comprehensive framework for digital marketing by examining the historical evolution of the internet and its impact on marketing practices. The suggested framework introduces the concept of cultural eras in digital marketing, highlighting four distinct cultural repertoires or practises that have emerged on the internet: collaborative systems, traditional market systems, co-creation systems, and prosumption market systems. These cultural repertoires represent different models of how stakeholders and organisations interact and create value within the digital environment and emphasise the interplay between cultural evolution and the behaviour of stakeholders and organisations (Rayna & Striukova, 2021:221). This illustrates how the internet's complexity has given rise to diverse cultural systems over time. A concise overview of the cultural repertoires as defined by Busca and Bertradias (2020) is presented for purposes of clarity.

Collaborative systems on the internet are distinguished by their decentralised management structures and significant behavioural diversity. In these systems, individuals actively participate in creating value and uphold a sense of peer status.

Traditional market systems maintain conventional producer-consumer relationships, where organisations supply goods and services to consumers who make choices based on the available offerings.

Co-creation systems facilitate the merging of roles of producers and consumers, enabling active involvement from both parties in the process of value creation.

Prosumption market systems involve individuals assuming both the roles of producers and consumers, while organisations primarily concentrate on coordinating tasks rather than engaging in direct production.

These cultural repertoires represent evolving consumer behaviour and organisational strategies in the digital domain. Every cultural phase includes a unique collection of principles, customs, and engagements that influence the manner in which value is generated and traded on the internet (Rayna & Striukova, 2021:221; Ritzer, 2017:83). Understanding these cultural repertoires is essential for marketers to efficiently customise their strategies to the particular cultural setting they are aiming for (Shen *et al.*, 2020:844). Marketers can enhance their strategies to better engage with consumers in the digital space by understanding the intricacies of collaborative, traditional, co-creation, and prosumption market systems. This allows them to align their approaches with the cultural dynamics of the internet, resulting in more meaningful and successful interactions.

For the sport sector, which comprises the government sector, non-profit sector and corporate sector, it holds significant implications in that it provides a way to navigate and leverage the digital landscape, enhancing the application of the three pillars of sport marketing (see paragraphs 2.4.1 and 2.5.4). For instance, collaborative systems align with both marketing through sport and marketing by sport, as it fosters community-driven initiatives, where stakeholders and participants actively engage in content creation, event planning, or programme development. This system promotes a sense of ownership and loyalty among stakeholders. Traditional marketing systems support the marketing of sport, as it is relevant for the commercial aspects of sport, such as merchandise sales, ticketing, and exclusive content offerings. It underscores the importance of straightforward transactions between sport entities and their consumer bases. Co-creation systems also align with marketing through sport and marketing by sport, as it blends the line between sport organisations and their stakeholders in the creation of value from product

development to enhancing the fan experience. This system can lead to highly personalised and engaging stakeholder experiences. Finally, the prosumption system resonates with all three pillars, where stakeholders are both consumers and producers, and is particularly pertinent in the current era of social media and digital platforms. Stakeholders can become brand ambassadors or advocates, content creators, and even informal marketers for sport entities.

In addition, a golden thread from the four cultural repertoires to the digital marketing principles in building relationships can be observed. Collaborative systems lay the groundwork for community-driven initiatives, directly fostering interaction and engagement by involving stakeholders in content creation and programme development, thereby nurturing a loyal community around sports entities. This aligns closely with stakeholder centricity, as it values and prioritises the input and active involvement of stakeholders, building a sense of ownership and loyalty. Traditional marketing systems streamline direct transactions for commercial purposes such as merchandise and ticket sales to provide stakeholders with a simple and efficient experience, demonstrating a fundamental focus on meeting stakeholder needs. Co-creation systems take personalisation to the next level by erasing the traditional boundaries between sport organisations and their stakeholders. This approach allows for a deeply personalised stakeholder experience, as both parties contribute to value creation, be it through product development or enhancing the stakeholder experience, thereby strengthening community bonds. By treating stakeholders as both consumers and producers, the prosumption model empowers stakeholders to become content creators, brand ambassadors, and advocates by leveraging social media and digital platforms. This dual role facilitates a deeper connection with the sport entity, encouraging a vibrant, engaged community that actively participates in the brand narrative.

Together, these systems offer a comprehensive framework for the sport sector to engage with its digital audience in a manner that is aligned with modern marketing principles, ensuring meaningful and sustained engagement. Against this backdrop, their utilisation of various digital functionalities requires proper management of the digital sport marketing strategy.

3.5.2 Managing the digital sport marketing strategy

After the sport organisation assesses where it is and where it wants to go, the next step is to determine how it will carry out its plan. This includes how resources should be allocated, how plans will be converted into actions and how the results will be compared with the plans set out to see if it will require adjustments (Kerin & Hartley, 2017:35; Parent & O'Brien, 2018:209). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016), the digital marketing strategy is a plan that outlines how organisations should use digital technologies to achieve its goals and objectives. A

strategic digital marketing process would provide the organisation an agenda that gives a logical sequence to track and include all the key activities of strategy development and implementation.

Referring to the discussions about the digital marketing principles for relationship building (see section 3.3), it is argued that these principles have become the new focal point of a digital marketing strategy in stakeholder relationship building. Furthermore, the functionalities of the marketing strategy are the building blocks of a coherent whole intended to achieve the maximum benefit in terms of effort, time and money (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2021:3; Jones *et al.*, 2011:222).

There are many models and structures in the literature on what a digital marketing strategy should consist of. SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) strategic planning is a management process that helps organisations to remain focused on achieving their goals. It was developed by George T. Doran in 1981 (Doran, 1981:35). A criticism of the SMART approach is that it leads marketers to act in pursuit of their goals or creates disinterest and dampens creativity (Haughey, 2014). The SMART approach is task and outcome-based, meaning that its emphasis is on setting clear objectives that are quantifiable and attainable within a specific timeframe. Conversely, the stakeholder-centric approach is process-driven, implying a focus on the ongoing relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders, rather than on predefined outcomes. This could involve interactivity and engagement, feedback and adaptability to stakeholders' needs and preferences. The stakeholder-centric model values the journey and seeks to optimise the processes that build strong, meaningful relationships over time.

GOST (goals, objectives, strategies and tactics) is a model that was developed by Horwath (2014). It is a simplistic model that provides the basics on developing a strategy for an organisation. However, it does not cater for the new perspectives of digital marketing, in which the focus is on achieving a specific outcome within the scope of individual projects.

RACE (reach, act, convert and engage) is another framework that marketers can use to plan and manage a digital marketing strategy in a more structured way. It is more suitable for a digital marketing strategy than GOST because it covers the full stakeholder lifecycle (Chaffey, 2022). While the framework prioritises engagement, it is worth questioning why it appears as the final step in the lifecycle rather than the first. Subsequent actions could then shift towards building relationships, rather than solely aiming for a specific result.

These models, however, are more focused on attaining short term goals and objectives than on the long-term strategy process. What is lacking is that they do not include an analysis of the organisation's current situation in the market and key performance indicators (KPIs) such as engagement and reach, which is needed for relationship building.

Smith (2020) developed the SOSTAC® model (see figure 3.2), which is a framework for a digital marketing strategy that includes all aspects of the strategy process. SOSTAC® stands for *Situation Analysis, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action and Control*. The stages are not discrete; there is some overlap during each stage of planning, leaving room for engagement and building relationships with stakeholders. Previous stages can be revisited and refined, as indicated by the reverse arrows in Figure 3.2 below. The SOSTAC® framework, thus, forms the foundation for the proposed framework in this study, but does not necessarily address all the context-specific challenges faced by the sport organisation. The elements of the SOSTAC® framework with respect to the digital marketing will be discussed next.



3.5.3.1 Situation analysis

- *Current digital stakeholders.* Questions to ask are: Who are the stakeholders, how do they interact with the brand, what digital channels do they use, and what are their behaviours and

demographic breakdown? The purpose is to create stakeholder personas to describe the existing stakeholders and what motivates them. Creating personas establishes buy-in across the organisation to paint a picture and bring to life stakeholder profiles, which will, in turn, stimulate interactivity and engagement.

- *An internet-specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis (SWOT).* Questions to ask are: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the whole sport organisation? It is, therefore, an assessment of internal capabilities (micro-environment), such as resources like new technology systems and digital channels implemented by the sport organisation (see paragraph 2.5.2). Furthermore, the wider environment in which the sport organisation operates (macro-environment) should be investigated, including economic development, government regulations, non-profit sport organisations, the corporate sector and the effect of COVID-19 (see paragraphs 2.4.1 and 2.5.3).
- *Competitor analysis.* Questions to ask are: Who are the sport organisation's competition and what are the competitors' activities with regards to new marketing concepts such as social communities, organisational values and stakeholder care.
- *Digital marketing functionalities.* Analysing the digital functionalities that perform best and that will, thus, help to drive the organisation's goals, such as the sport organisation's website, email marketing, SEO marketing, online marketing, blogs and social media channels.

In the evaluation of the current state of digital marketing within the South African sport industry, a situation analysis will identify existing challenges and opportunities in the sector and provide a foundation for understanding the context in which sport organisations operate. This is essential for developing effective marketing strategies.

3.5.3.2 Objectives

By identifying objectives, the sport organisation will determine where it wants to be. In the specific field of digital sport marketing, objectives should be flexible to adapt to the changes in the organisation, but more so to changes brought about by the technological evolution (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:190). Because the activities of digital marketing, such as social media activities, are mostly horizontal and involve several departments in the organisation, all role players should agree on the new objectives to be set. In a digital marketing plan, the most usual types of objectives are scope, activity, conversion and loyalty objectives. These goals cover all aspects of what the organisation wants to achieve in its strategy. Once these objectives are set,

they must be implemented through KPIs to enable measurement and monitoring. Examples of KPIs are the number of site visits, bounce rate, page views and the number of shares (Kotler *et al.*, 2017:125; Piñeiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán, 2016:43).

Within the digital environment, the objectives of sport marketing might incorporate elements such as enhancing awareness, which could potentially result in increased participation in sport events, amplified ticket sales and a rise in revenue from sponsorships by enticing sponsors and partners. The marketers might also aim to foster stronger engagement with stakeholders by nurturing relationships and offering a channel for interaction with the organisation (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:190; Kotler *et al.*, 2017:125).

3.5.3.3 Strategy

Kingsnorth (2022) defines “strategy” as the path an organisation takes to attain its objectives, summarising the necessary steps at the decision points. This strategy should take into account the social communities of stakeholders, the distinct characteristics and values of the sport organisation and the care of stakeholders. In addition, Smith (2020) suggests that a digital marketing strategy functions primarily as a channel marketing strategy. It outlines how the organisation should formulate specific objectives for each channel to cultivate enduring relationships with stakeholders. Consequently, a unique plan and communication strategy should be devised for each channel, aligning with the specific characteristics of the channel and user needs. The digital marketing strategy should, therefore:

- be based on objectives for online lead generation and sales through a specific channel, for instance, the sport organisation’s website and email campaigns;
- consider the types of stakeholders that use and can be effectively reached through the channel;
- support the stakeholder journey as they select and purchase products, using this channel in combination with other channels;
- define a unique, proposition or intention for the channel;
- specify how this proposition is communicated to persuade stakeholders to use online services in conjunction with other channels;
- manage the online stakeholder lifecycle through the stages of attracting visitors to the website, converting them into stakeholders and turning them into loyal advocates; and

- be consistent with the types of stakeholders that use and can be effectively reached through the digital communications channels.

Setting clear, measurable goals for digital marketing efforts directly supports the study's aim to propose actionable strategies that can enhance engagement, reach, and the overall marketing performance of sport organisations. This step ensures that the strategies developed align with specific outcomes, making the research directly applicable to industry needs.

3.5.3.4 Tactics

Smith (2020) describes tactics as the details of the strategy, which includes the tactical digital communications that will define how exactly the sport organisation will engage and interact with its stakeholders to build relationships. This comprises specific details of the digital marketing mix, social channels, content calendars, CRM, and so on. Tactical decisions are driven by the overarching strategy and, as such, are dependent on clearly defined values (Smith, 2020:189)..

The traditional promotional mix elements, such as advertising, sales promotion, word-of-mouth, events and sponsorships, direct marketing, personal selling and public relations, have also been transformed in the digital environment (Swan, 2022). Smith (2020) describes how the traditional promotional mix elements should be applied as tactical promotional functionalities in the digital environment:

- Traditional advertising has been converted into Google Ads, social media advertising, programmatic advertising, and so on.
- Public relations have been converted into online editorials, online newsletters, magazines, discussion groups and viral marketing.
- Sponsorships have been converted into the sponsoring of online events, such as gaming.
- Exhibitions, events and conferences have been converted into virtual exhibitions, virtual events and webinars.
- Direct mail has been converted into opt-in emails and e-newsletters.
- Shops and malls have been converted into the website and e-commerce, which is linked to SEO and marketing automation.
- Word-of-mouth is now conversations, recommendations, criticisms, feedback, social media channels and forums.

- Sales promotions have become content marketing, incentives, rewards, online loyalty schemes and competitions.
- Merchandising and packaging are now e-tailing, QR codes, augmented reality and virtual reality.

The tactical aspect relates to the specific actions and methods employed to execute the strategy. This directly supports the research objectives focused on identifying and recommending practical digital marketing techniques and best practices for sport organisations, providing a detailed roadmap for implementation.

The traditional promotional mix elements could, therefore, be redefined as the digital promotional mix elements the sport organisation could implement as tactics to attain its defined objectives of interacting and engaging with its stakeholders.

3.5.3.5 Actions

Actions refer to the details of the tactics and who does what and when, and to action plans, change management and project management skills. This might include responsibilities and structures within the sport organisation, internal resources and skills and external agencies (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:190).

The digital sport marketing team should know what the organisation's strategy is, understand the goals, set deadlines and milestones, be able to measure results and create a written plan. To ensure excellent execution of the strategy and tactics, everyone should know who must do what, when and how. In the digital environment, team collaboration software, such as work operating systems, group chats, online video conferencing, instant messaging and personalised video meeting rooms, has evolved. Examples are Monday.com, Evernote, Zoom and Microsoft Teams. These tools have become unavoidable in the digital age, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Kingsnorth, 2022:82; Smith, 2020:230). This component is crucial to achieving the research objective of developing a feasible and actionable digital marketing framework to serve as a clear guide for sport organisations to follow.

3.5.3.6 Control

Control refers to how the sport organisation is going to monitor performance. It is the process that focus on use of management information, including web analytics, to assess whether strategic and tactical objectives have been achieved and how improvements can be made to enhance the

results. In short, it is to monitor and to measure. It is closely related to goal setting, as described in step two (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016:190; Swan, 2022).

The control section should contain the KPIs, which need to be measured on a daily, monthly and quarterly basis. The purpose of this section is to put the digital sport marketer in control by describing who measures what, when and how much it costs. All the metrics measured at the end of each period are used in the next cycle's situation analysis when analysing results and performance. The performance and results section in the situation analysis is then used to inform, or set, more realistic objectives. The objectives then need to be controlled, or monitored, regularly (Kingsnorth, 2022:82; Smith, 2020:256). This aligns with research objectives aimed at ensuring the proposed strategies are effective, adaptable, and capable of delivering on the desired outcomes.

While the SOSTAC® model is often used for developing marketing strategies, there has been criticism regarding its application in the context of sport marketing. Due to its predominantly linear and sequential nature, the model might not be optimally suited for flexible sport environments characterised by rapid fluctuations, such as shifts in team performance and fluctuations in stakeholder sentiment (see paragraph 2.5.1). Sport organisations not only engage in the sale of products or services, but also play a crucial role in cultivating a sense of community and establishing emotional connections with stakeholders. This emotional engagement is an essential aspect that is currently absent from the existing model. Ultimately, the model might exhibit a level of generality that could potentially result in a lack of the specialised details necessary to effectively address the complexities that exist within the realm of the sport sectors. These complexities include the management of athlete endorsements and seasonal fluctuations, and the utilisation of real-time analytics (see to paragraph 2.4).

In summary, the SOSTAC® model's comprehensive approach to planning and execution makes it an invaluable framework for guiding the research objectives of this study, as it ensures that the proposed digital marketing strategies are well-grounded, actionable, and directly relevant to the needs of the sport industry in South Africa.

The SOSTAC® model shares similarities with the seven Cs model of digital marketing (see paragraph 3.4.1), but also differs in terms of specific focus and level of detail. To this end, both models are suitable for creating and executing successful digital marketing strategies and encourage conducting a thorough situational analysis, with the goal of fully unfolding and understanding the various layers of the current context. The core of these models is based on a set of distinct and clearly defined goals, establishing the basis for future advances. The importance of strategic planning and implementation as crucial elements in guiding the future

course of events is also highlighted in both models. Finally, both models emphasise the importance of monitoring and evaluating performance using metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs).

The SOSTAC® model can therefore be seen as providing a comprehensive, step-by-step approach that is adaptable to different industries, including the sport industry. Whereas SOSTAC® is portrayed as more linear, the seven Cs model appears more cyclical, with evaluation feeding back into analysis for continuous improvement. The seven Cs model therefore serves as a more customised model, tailored for digital marketing. It also places a stronger emphasis on customer-centric practices like personalised communication, nurturing communities, and optimising the user experience. It can thus be stated that the SOSTAC® model is an overarching strategic marketing process, whereas the seven Cs model is more specialised with a focus on key components and best practices.

Given its broad applicability and adaptability across various industries, the SOSTAC® model was used as the foundational framework of this study. Its overarching structure provides a solid base from which to develop a comprehensive digital marketing strategy. To enrich this foundation and address the distinctive features of digital marketing in depth, the seven Cs model was incorporated as an extension of the SOSTAC® framework. This integration serves to leverage the seven Cs model's focus on content strategy, channel selection, communication, conversion optimisation, and customer retention, alongside customer-centric practices like stakeholder analysis and personalised communication. By combining the structured approach of SOSTAC® with the detailed and cyclical nature of the seven Cs, this study seeks to create a nuanced digital marketing framework that can accommodate continuous improvement and effectively cater to the unique complexities of sport marketing.

The various components of digital marketing, such as the website of the organisation, email marketing, SEO, display and online advertising, blogs, customer relationship management and social media channels, offer substantial possibilities for interaction and engagement. Hence, it is imperative for the sport organisation to utilise these capabilities as part of their strategy to build relationships. The incorporation of the SOSTAC® model supported by the seven Cs model offers a comprehensive framework that effectively integrates essential digital marketing functionalities. This enhances the sport organisation's ability to connect and engage with its stakeholders.

3.5.4 The functionalities of a digital marketing

Various digital marketing strategies can be employed by the sport sectors to engage and connect with stakeholders. Choosing the right approach should be based on thorough research to ensure

the highest return on investment (ROI), which could be financial gains or improvements in stakeholder experience. These ROI can also vary across the sport sectors; for instance, the corporate sector will see a faster and higher ROI on marketing efforts due to higher visibility and engagement. In contrast, the non-profit sector with less popular sport will need a longer period to attain the same ROI because they are not exposed to the same form of visibility. Moreover, the goals and metrics for ROI will also differ for the sport sectors; for instance, a professional sport team falling in the corporate sport sector might measure ROI in the form of ticket sales and viewership, whereas the non-profit sector might see their ROI in the form of increased participation or community engagement. A one-size-fits-all approach is, thus, not possible for sport marketing, which further strengthens the argument for the development of a sport marketing framework that is unique for sport.

As is the case with traditional marketing, the digital sport marketing campaigns should be integrated and used in sync with each other (Safko, 2012:78). Gibson (2018) conducted a study to examine digital marketing's best practices and proposed that the main functionalities of digital marketing campaigns were website, email marketing, SEO, display and online advertising campaigns, blogs, customer relation management and social media marketing.

3.5.4.1 Website

Jones *et al.* (2011) indicate that a website is the public face of the organisation and forms the centre of a digital marketing strategy because all efforts are aimed at driving traffic to a particular website. It is, therefore, important that the website is user friendly and provides informative content, takes the stakeholder on a journey on the website and creates an experience for the stakeholder that he or she will share with family and friends.

Another reason for which a website is essential is that internet usage in South Africa has grown significantly in the past years, showing an online audience of about 34.5 million active users in December 2021 (Internet World Stats, 2022). This includes mobile, tablet and desktop traffic. Moreover, according to Myburgh (2018), a PricewaterhouseCooper's report on South African Entertainment and Media reveals that most people access the internet in South Africa via mobile devices and that mobile internet subscribers has grown to 43 million by 2022. For the sport organisation, this implies the necessity of an active web presence with up-to-date content so that products and services can be research at any time.

In contrast to printed brochures, pamphlets or even a billboard next to the highway, a website is more interactive and provides for engagement by means of email addresses, phone numbers and a comments section. Websites usually also have buttons that link to the organisation's social

media pages, where products can be shared and rated in online communities (see paragraph 2.5.1). Consequently, the website is usually the first point of contact the user has with the organisation and should thus, be developed with the user in mind, implying stakeholder centricity to enhance relationship building.

3.5.4.2 E-mail

Electronic mail, commonly known as email, has become a modern-day marketing technique that is similar to what was formally called direct marketing. Marketers have increasingly started to communicate directly with current and prospective stakeholders because campaigns can be narrowly targeted and are more affordable than traditional channels (Das & Lall, 2016:8; Yasmin *et al.*, 2015:72).

Emails are usually sent with the intention of selling, promoting, educating, informing or persuading, and are generally packaged in the form of a subscription newsletter, flyer, competition or sales promotion. Content is, thus, important and can take on the form of an attractive mix of graphics, text and/or advertisements that link to the sport organisation's website. The aim is to build trust, brand and stakeholder loyalty, and to create brand awareness (Das & Lall, 2016:8; Dimitrova & Sin, 2018:27).

There are many email marketing software products available, such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, ConvertKit, GetResponse and AWeber. These packages generally provide the same services and include free trials, a variety of email templates, social media integration and email scheduling (Jones *et al.*, 2011; Smith, 2020). Consequently, organisations can automate their marketing workflows, track statistics, segment stakeholder data and deliver personalised, targeted messages at the right time based on stakeholders' likes and dislikes. It is relatively low cost compared to advertising or other forms of media exposure (Dimitrova & Sin, 2018:27; Yasmin *et al.*, 2015:72). Thus, by scheduling personalised emails with quality content for a particular time and day could encourage forming relationships with the sport organisation because stakeholders will be on the lookout for emails with new and fresh content.

On the negative side, stakeholder's inboxes are cluttered with spam or unwelcome and unwanted commercial messages sent in bulk from people they do not know. Typically, email marketing can be viewed as a traditional form of marketing because communication is mostly one-way, with no engagement. Unwanted emails make it harder for sport marketers to communicate because stakeholders will just delete them or it will go directly to their junk mail folder. Engagement and conversation are possible only if the stakeholder clicks on the links provided, directing them to the organisation's website and social media channels, where engagement and two-way

communication can occur, underlining the importance of valuable and relevant content. Once there, a well-designed stakeholder journey can foster deeper engagement and relationship building and pave the way for more meaningful interactions.

3.5.4.3 Search Engine Optimisation

SEO amplifies the importance of the sport organisation's website because it is one of the main marketing techniques to drive traffic to websites. SEO plays a dominant role in digital sport marketing, since it influences the positioning or visibility of digital channels available to the sport organisation, such as websites, blogs and social network accounts. In effect, it means these websites can be optimised to improve their rankings on the search engine's results page, to be first displayed when searches are performed using search engines (Dimitrova & Sin, 2018:25; Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016:64).

Typical search engines are Google, Yahoo and Bing, of which Google is by far the most popular. About 3.5 billion Google searches are conducted every day on Google and 35% of product searches start on Google. As was the tendency with website and email marketing, the number of searches done on mobile devices (52%) are higher than searches done using desktop computers. With these high volumes of searches, sport organisations have greater chances of being found by search engines, which will direct stakeholders to their websites (Bond, 2017). Therefore, the higher the website is ranked on the search results page and the more frequently a website appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine users. SEO might target various types of searches, including image, local, video, academic, news and industry-specific vertical search engines (Yasmin *et al.*, 2015:72).

In practice, to attract stakeholders to the sport organisation's website or other digital channels, the content should be relevant and captivating, and contain diverse keywords that can be picked up by the search engine when the users search using the relevant keywords. Moreover, SEO performance can be monitored by web analytics tools, such as Google analytics, which provide insights about the visitors to the website, how they reached the website and their activities on the site (Das & Lall, 2016:8; Dimitrova & Sin, 2018; Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016:64).

SEO is, therefore, a tool that sport organisations can utilise to drive traffic to their website through the strategic use of sport-specific keywords such as the name of the sport event, slogan of the event or the activities the sport represents. Choosing the right keywords, could trigger a sense of recognition and belonging with fans and supporters, thus leading to building relationships with them. However, it cannot be done without content; for example, what the sport is about, its history, results and training programmes in the form of blog articles, social networks and email campaigns.

When content adds value, people will share the links with their communities, which is critical for SEO. Search engines make the connection between similar content, links and keywords, which increases the chances of a higher ranking on the search engine (Gabbert, 2023; Giomelakis *et al.*, 2019:3; Jones *et al.*, 2011:222).

3.5.4.4 Display and online advertising

Display advertising is the advertising of a product or service on internet websites, apps and social media, such as Google Display Network and Facebook ads. Das and Lall (2016) indicate that display advertising can have many formats, through which the message is visually conveyed using images, text, logos, animations, videos, photographs and other graphics. The main purpose of display advertising is to deliver general advertisements and brand messages to site visitors to encourage them to take a specific action, such as to click on a link to a landing page and make a purchase (Bayer *et al.*, 2020:750).

Advertisers also make use of cookies, which are unique identifiers of specific computers. Advertisements are then targeted to that stakeholder. Through cookies, it can be established whether a user left a page without buying anything, how much time the user spent on the site and which site was visited next. User visitation data is collected across multiple external websites about the online activities of a user, from which a profile is compiled about their interests and geography for more targeted advertising (Gibson, 2018:15; Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016:64).

Online advertising differs from display advertising in that it is placed on other peoples' websites; for instance, buying banner space on a specific website and paying the website owner based on the number of clicks the advert receives (Das & Lall, 2016; Yasmin *et al.*, 2015). The most popular instrument in online advertising is banners, also referred to as "online banner ads". Unlike traditional advertising, online banner ads can be used on a variety of electronic channels such as emails, websites, blogs and social media channels (Bayer *et al.*, 2020:750; Gibson, 2018:15).

As with all mass advertising, however, it is unwanted and intrusive. It is not popular among internet users because it is forced on them and is one-way communication, even though it is digital. It is, therefore, not an ideal tool to be used in building stakeholder relationships. At best, it is a tool that can be used to create awareness.

3.5.4.5 Blogs

Blogging is a form of content marketing and helps organisations to be found on the Internet. According to Harvey and Sanchez (2022), marketers who utilise blogs at least once a week and especially emphasise educational content are more likely to drive positive ROI. Regular blogging

will also generate more indexable pages that lead to more and higher listings in organic searches on Google (Harvey & Sanchez, 2022:143; Jones *et al.*, 2011:222). Content should, thus, be meaningful, entertaining, solve problems and create value for the audience.

Channels such as LinkedIn and podcasts create an environment for sport organisations to publish information on blogs that is original and accessible to make their products popular and unique, and ultimately reach out to consumers who are using social media. Blogs can be updated frequently and are a form of promotion to keep stakeholders and to attract subscribers, who can then be directed to social network pages (Das & Lall, 2016:8).

Blogging is different from transactional digital marketing channels because it offers a personal touch. The sport sectors can use blogs to share behind-the-scenes photographs, athletes' biographies and opinion pieces that connect with viewers on a deep emotional level. By encouraging a feeling of community and connection between the brand and its stakeholders, this more personal type of content can significantly improve the stakeholder journey (Alsaleh, 2017:24; Sinha *et al.*, 2011:188). The personal nature of blogs can, thus, act as a catalyst for interaction, which makes it a vital tool for developing a thorough and emotionally impactful stakeholder experience.

3.5.4.6 Customer Relationship Management system

While CRM systems might not be traditionally classified as digital marketing, they can be a significant asset for sport organisations, especially in nurturing relationships with communities. Sport stakeholders are unique and dedicated consumers who frequently champion their favourite teams. Various CRM software packages, such as Microsoft's Dynamics CRM and Monday.com, are available to help sport organisations build and sustain relationships with their stakeholders. The financial success of a sport event or team is not solely reliant on their performance; it also depends on their ability to engage stakeholders (Huiszoon *et al.*, 2016).

Sport organisations can utilise CRM software to develop detailed profiles of their stakeholders using data such as ticket and retail purchase history, demographic information, participation history and website sign-ups. This data can then be used to increase engagement, loyalty, and value for both the organisation and its stakeholders. In sport marketing, a CRM system uses data analysis, personalised communication, and customer service to provide a more customised and personalised sport experience which is more engaging and rewarding, with the goal of converting the audience into loyal brand supporters and advocates (Dutta, 2021; Scott, 2018). For instance, a sport franchise might use this data to promote entries for an event and target groups with email campaigns. Sponsors are also looking for a deeper relationship with participants and want

comprehensive insights about the supporters. CRM systems can, thus, help sport organisations understand their stakeholders' preferences and behaviours, which is crucial for maintaining their interest in the specific sport (Huiszoon *et al.*, 2016). In creating a digital marketing framework to address the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa, a CRM system forms a critical component as it offers a structured method for collecting and analysing stakeholder data, personalising marketing efforts, nurturing communities and improving customer service. This ensures that digital marketing strategies are data-driven and focused on providing meaningful experiences.

The proposed framework aims to provide sport organisations with the tools and strategies needed to navigate the complexities of the digital marketing landscape, ensuring that they can effectively engage with their audiences and achieve their marketing and business goals.

3.5.4.7 Social media marketing

One of the most important functionalities of digital marketing is social media marketing, which people often associate, incorrectly, with the well-known social networks, which is just a small part of a larger channel. The introduction of social media gave rise to the so-called Web 2.0, which was first introduced in 1999. Web 2.0 saw a shift in the way that websites were created and led to the internet becoming a social place, which enabled the establishment of online communities in the form of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, YouTube and Instagram, to name but a few. These social networks are the perfect place to interact and engage with stakeholders to establish relationships. They have, therefore, become the new marketplace and, for the purposes of this study, the marketplace for the sport sectors.

Authors have differing views of social media marketing, of which the most important thoughts are discussed below. Firstly, social media marketing can be summarised as a form of internet marketing, utilising social networking sites that allow individuals and sport organisations to produce and publish content that stakeholders will share with their social networks to gain traffic, brand exposure and interaction (Das & Lall, 2016:8; Dodson, 2016:185; Yasmin *et al.*, 2015:72). Another view is that social media marketing is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Gibson, 2018:14; Wienclaw, 2017:3). Dimitrova and Sin (2018:26) describe social media marketing as a process by which organisations build relationships, communicate with each other and deliver online marketing offerings via social media channels.

The above viewpoints indicate that social media marketing is directed at interconnected links of individuals who share information. Users of social media follow and monitor various brands on

social networks and thereby do not only receive information online, but also actively interact and engage by contributing to brand communication activities. Information that is shared is either personal or professional and most of the content is created by the users themselves. Posting content on the internet through social media networks that gets shared creates traffic to the organisation's website, which will lead to brand exposure and engagement. This will result in the establishment of online communities and building stakeholder relationships (see the diverse sport environment in section 2.5.1).

A negative aspect of the evolution of social media networks is the added volume of content on the internet. Every organisation and user shares content daily, causing a reduction and watering down the reach and impact of messages. There is, thus, the potential of oversaturation. (Schaefer, 2021) refers to this content overload as "content shock". Because organisations and brands are competing for a share of the limited space in a social media network's timeline, the content that is posted to a sport organisation's social media network is not competing only with that of the competitors but also with other businesses' content, as well as with pictures of friends, relatives, pets and babies (Peruta & Shields, 2018:177; Zarrella, 2013:181). As noted in section 3.3.6, to stand out and get recognised amid this content shock and to succeed in their social media efforts, sport organisations should create interesting, sharable content that connects and engages.

There are several types of media the sport sectors could use for social media marketing. Dodson (2016) distinguishes between earned media and owned media. Earned media is free publicity generated by the organisation's followers in response to content they like by sharing it with their followers, such as family and friends. A well-crafted post that people would want to share will, thus, go a long way. Owned media is content that the organisation creates and controls and is posted on its own channels. Earned and owned media are also referred to as "organic social media", which is free and usually in the form of photographs, videos, infographics and text. Organic social media is seen as the foundation of a digital marketing strategy because it is the best way to engage and foster relationships with stakeholders by sharing informative, entertaining and inspiring content (Dodson, 2016:187; Schaefer, 2021:15; Zarrella, 2013:35). It is especially well-suited for connecting and engaging with sport stakeholders who have an emotional attachment to their sport and whose levels of excitement can fluctuate (see paragraph 2.5.1).

A third media type is paid media, which is any paid activity that drives traffic to owned media on the website. Paid social media refers to brands paying money to Facebook, X, LinkedIn and Instagram to "boost" their content or advertisement, which is targeted at specific audiences who are likely to be interested in the content (Dimitrova & Sin, 2018:26; Dodson, 2016:187; Zarrella, 2013:35). For the sport organisation, therefore, the ideal is to have an integrated social media

strategy by using organic content that resonates with and excites existing stakeholders, and then attracting new stakeholders with paid media. However, paid social media is nothing other than advertising and is unwanted and intrusive, as noted above (see sections 3.3.1). The sport organisation will benefit more from creating content that the stakeholder will share to their various online communities. In effect, this means that the sport organisation is getting free publicity and that the stakeholder is marketing the product on behalf of the organisation (see paragraph 3.3.1).

The effectiveness of websites and social media channels in converting engagement into tangible outcomes, such as ticket sales or event participation, can be difficult to measure or to attribute solely to these functionalities (Troise & Camilleri, 2021:4). It might be challenging to demonstrate a direct link between online engagement and the desired financial outcomes or ROI, which can raise concerns among stakeholders who prioritise tangible results.

The ever-changing nature of technology and algorithms in these digital channels, combined with AI, requires sport organisations to continuously adapt their strategies and keep updated on the latest trends and features (Kujala *et al.*, 2022:1145). This can require significant investments of time, resources and expertise to keep up with the evolving digital landscape. As noted above, with reference to the functionalities of digital marketing, the latter can be integrated and combined as a digital hub to create a framework for digital sport marketing. Furthermore, the mechanisms that should be included in designing and implementing such a framework were described.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the complex landscape of digital marketing in the specific context of sport in South Africa and provided a detailed examination of the strategies and principles required to build strong relationships with sport stakeholders. The traditional marketing mix was compared to its digital equivalent, highlighting the significant impact of the digital world in improving the sport experience. The focus then shifted to a detailed analysis of the components of digital marketing crucial to the sport industry. These include stakeholder centricity, interactivity, engagement, personalisation, customisation and community building. Each of these elements play a fundamental role in establishing significant connections between sport brands and their stakeholders. The way in which these principles are closely integrated into the structure of digital sport marketing was outlined. This includes the creation of extensive online platforms that bring communities together, as well as the promotion of engagement through interactive content that aligns with the interests of stakeholders. The importance of customising experiences and content to cater to the distinct preferences of sport stakeholders, so as to improve their transition from passive observers to engaged participants, was highlighted.

Cultural repertoires were explored to indicate that marketers can align with the internet's cultural dynamics to engage stakeholders more effectively, by understanding and integrating the collaborative, traditional, co-creation, and prosumption market systems into their strategies. In the sport sector, these cultural repertoires provide a solid framework to navigate and leverage digital landscapes, optimising the three pillars of sport marketing, namely marketing of sport, through sport, and by sport. This integration promotes community-driven initiatives, personalisation, and stakeholder ownership and loyalty, making transactions smooth and efficient. These systems enable a well-managed digital sport marketing strategy that builds meaningful, long-term stakeholder relationships, keeping the sport sector actively engaged with its audience through modern marketing principles.

From this perspective, the chapter presents a detailed case for strategically incorporating these elements into a comprehensive digital marketing framework, in that it explored the SOSTAC® model supported by the seven Cs theory of digital communication. The goal is to not only enhance the promotion of sport events, teams, and athletes but also to utilise the widespread popularity of sport as a platform for broader marketing goals. With this goal in mind, Figure 3.4 serves as a visual illustration of how digital marketing can be utilised in building relationships with sport stakeholders based on literature, emphasising the interconnection of different strategies and the cyclical process of interacting, analysing, and improving marketing efforts to focus on stakeholder needs and preferences.

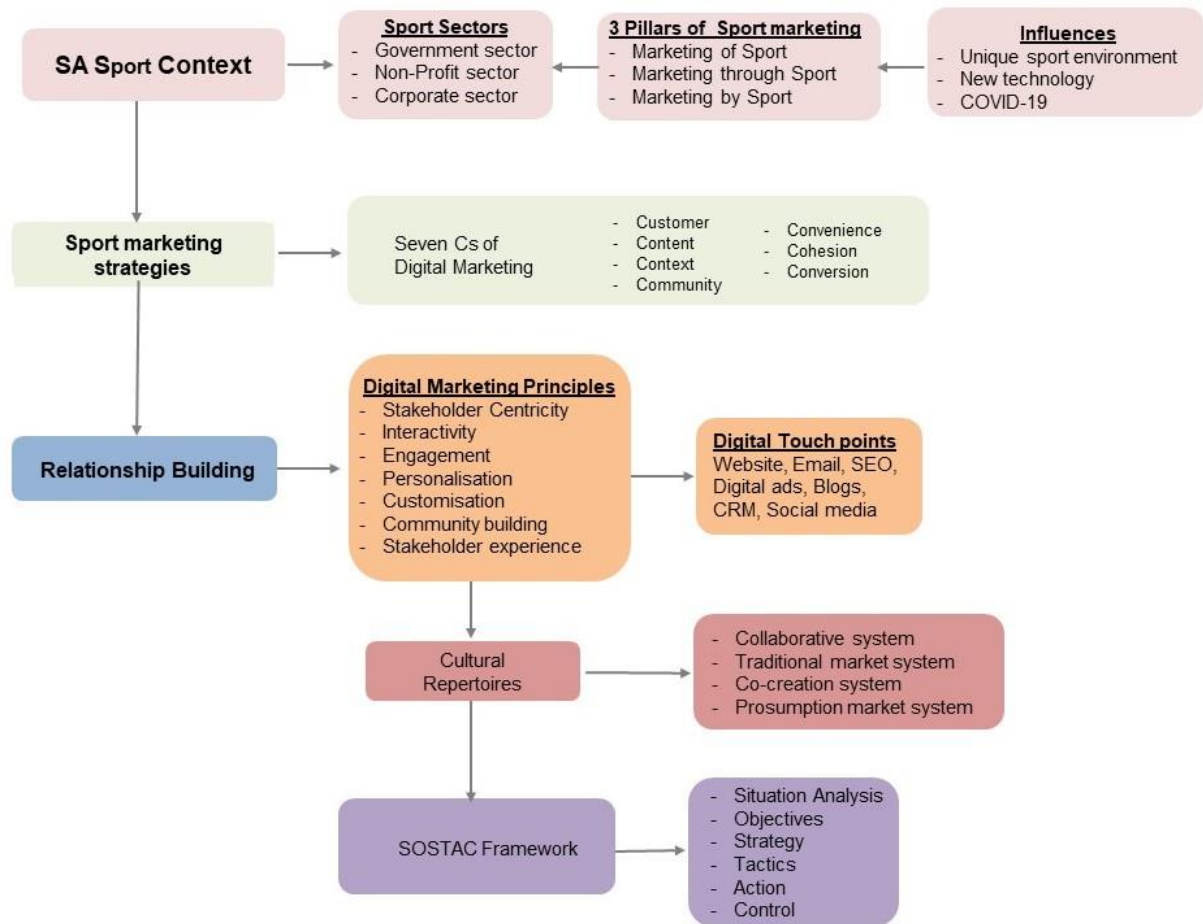


Figure 3-4: Utilising digital marketing in relationship building (Authors own interpretation)

This strategic initiative aims to answer the study's second research question, which is:

How could digital marketing be utilised in relationship building with sport stakeholders, according to the literature?

Based on the arguments advanced in the chapter, the following specific guiding arguments were formulated to serve as guideline.

It was argued that the sport sector's marketing should be adapted to focus on relationship building with stakeholders (see paragraph 3.2), which gave rise to the second specific guiding argument:

The concept of marketing has changed over the years due to the advances in the environment, the market and consumer behaviour. This requires sport organisations to adapt their marketing approach to relationship building through interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience.

Next, it was argued that a digital marketing strategy should be put in place to manage the direction the organisation wants to take and formulate actions on how to implement it (see paragraph 3.5.1), leading to the third specific guiding statement:

The focus on tracking progress, achieving goals, organisation workflow and gathering market information is universal in marketing. However, in the context of sport, these activities are rooted in the industry's fast, event-driven cycles and the emotional bonds that stakeholders have with sport teams and athletes. Sport organisations must, therefore, be quick to react, sensitive to and emotionally connected to their stakeholders. To gain a competitive advantage, they must take a specialised approach to managing their digital strategy, which includes situation analysis, setting objectives, strategy formulation, tactical implementation, action and control.

To implement a digital marketing strategy, the sport sector would need to consider which functionalities of the digital marketing strategy (see paragraph 3.5.2) to utilise which informs the fourth specific guiding statement:

Digital marketing involves using the channels of digital marketing such as websites, mobile devices and social media channels. Sport organisations should, therefore, execute digital marketing campaigns for example through websites and social media channels such as a) Facebook and b) Instagram.

Finally, it was reasoned that websites were the public face of organisations and constituted the centre of a digital marketing strategy. Moreover, social media sites enable organisations to produce and publish content that stakeholders will share with their social networks to gain traffic, brand exposure and interaction. It is, thus, a process by which organisations build relationships, communicate with stakeholders and deliver online marketing offerings (see paragraphs 3.5.2.1 and 3.5.2.7). This argument gave rise to the fifth specific guiding statement:

Digital channels are a strategic asset for sport organisations, integrating the functionalities of a website and social media marketing. Sport organisations should, therefore, enhance user interaction and engagement, foster content creation, nurture a sense of community among stakeholders and drive traffic to their website.

In this chapter, it was indicated that in the digital environment, the three pillars of sport marketing should focus on stakeholder centricity for relationship building. New technology has enabled stakeholders to have access to more information than ever before. Through strategically creating and providing valuable information by utilising the functionalities of digital marketing, sport

organisations will build lasting relations with stakeholders, who will not only return to the organisation, but will also share the content with their communities.

Chapter 4 comprises an overview of the research design and methodology that were utilised in the empirical part of the study.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODS: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS, CONTENT ANALYSIS AND QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study was to develop a digital marketing framework that caters for the unique challenges facing South African sport. It was argued that sport in South Africa was complex because it consisted of three interconnected sectors that focused on different aspects of sport. The unique nature of sport, the evolution of new technologies and the COVID-19 pandemic have all contributed to this complexity. In Chapter 2, the factors relevant to the context of sport that can influence digital sport marketing in South Africa were investigated.

The third chapter was an examination of digital marketing in terms of interactivity, engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience as a means of relationship building within the complexities of South Africa's sport environment. With the advent of new technologies, it was reasoned, stakeholder behaviours had changed and a stakeholder-centric approach should be adopted by managing a digital marketing strategy and utilising digital marketing functionalities.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the methods that were used for the empirical part of the study, which should result in answering the specific research questions stated in Chapter 1.

A multi-methods research approach was utilised. Firstly, a qualitative research approach was followed for the semi-structured interviews with sport marketers and the content analysis of their websites and social media channels, specifically Facebook and Instagram. This provided input on what and how sport organisations are utilising digital marketing. Secondly, a quantitative research approach was applied for the survey by means of an electronic survey to establish how sport stakeholders perceived sport organisations' digital marketing practices. The planning and sampling methods and the sample frame and size are outlined in this chapter, as well as the qualitative analysis and processing of the quantitative data. Components such as validity, reliability and ethics, and their contribution to the study, are also explained herein.

4.2 THE MULTI-METHODS RESEARCH APPROACH

Multi-method research involves using a combination of different research methods to address a research question comprehensively. In the context of this study, which integrates semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and electronic surveys, this approach allows for a more robust and holistic exploration of the research topic (Du Plooy, 2009; Edwards & Holland, 2013).

The approach is premised on the realistic worldview of non-commitment to any one system of philosophy, which allows researchers to hold a variety of assumptions, the use of multiple methods, and diverse forms of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:10). The relevance of employing a multi-method approach lies in its ability to triangulate findings from different sources, enhancing the validity and reliability of the study. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, a comprehensive understanding of the digital marketing strategies employed by sport organisations in South Africa will be obtained. This approach not only enriches the research but also strengthens the credibility and depth of the findings.

4.2.1 The Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research is interpretive and the aim is to provide a high degree of understanding. One of the main characteristics of the qualitative research approach is that it combines a wide variety of non-numerical data and is used to determine the perceptions of stakeholders based on words and feelings. It can include methods such as experiments, interviews, focus groups or questionnaires with open-ended questions to obtain a holistic view (Berger, 2018:13; Leedy & Ormrod, 2015:269). In qualitative research, the researcher is central in the data collection process and closely engages with the respondents being studied. He or she has the knowledge, understanding and expertise to interpret the data (Henning *et al.*, 2010:95).

Babbie and Mouton (2012) describe the unique features of qualitative research that make it applicable to this study.

- The researcher focuses on the process rather than the outcomes. For example, in this study, the focus was on how sport marketers used the functionalities of digital marketing to build stakeholder relationships within their various functions and areas of expertise.
- The researcher process can utilise a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. The known theory of RM was used deductively as the point of departure to explore pre-existing concepts and constructs within sport marketing. The researcher then collected the data using semi-structured interviews. The pre-existing concepts were explored deductively from the point of view of the individual being studied, but the exploration was also flexible in the sense

that the researcher was open to revisiting and adding additional concepts as new ideas emerged inductively from the collected data.

The qualitative research approach was used to examine the complex nature of a particular phenomenon. The researcher not only wished to establish what happened, but also how and why it happened the way it did.

4.2.2 The Quantitative Research Approach

In the quantitative approach, the objective is to obtain or collect numerical data related to social phenomena utilising statistical, mathematical or computational techniques to explain a certain occurrence (Berger, 2018:13; Muijs, 2012:9). Punch (2013) has a simpler view, namely that quantitative research comprises the use of numbers and measurements to express the findings in the form of quantities. Neuman (2014) describes quantitative research methods as including aspects such as measuring objective facts, focusing on variables, separating theory and value, statistical analysis and detaching the researcher from the problem.

Data collected from stakeholders in sport can be described and the level of occurrences of actions can be measured based on numbers and calculations. The information obtained gave structure to the study to make certain assumptions and draw comparisons regarding variables such as lifestyles, attitudes and preferences, which provided an indication of their perceptions of the application of digital marketing strategies to sport marketing in South Africa (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:12).

In the case of this study, an electronic survey was distributed to sport stakeholders to obtain insights into sport organisations' digital marketing strategies to answer the research question on the perceptions of sport stakeholders. The information gathered through the electronic survey was processed by the Statistical Consultation Services of North-West University's Potchefstroom campus. The compilation of the sample size is described in paragraph 4.4.

The following section is a summary of the research design and how the qualitative and quantitative approaches are combined in the research.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design constitutes an outline of the research methods selected to answer the specific research questions.

4.3.1 Research questions and research methods

As specified previously (see chapter 1, section 1.4), the current researcher employed four methods to collect data, namely:

- Literature review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Qualitative content analysis
- Quantitative survey by means of an electronic questionnaire

The specific research questions were derived from the general research question, namely:

Which concepts should a digital marketing framework consist of to address the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa?

Moreover, what digital sport marketing strategies are implemented by sport marketers, how do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of digital marketing in their digital marketing strategies and what are the stakeholders' perceptions of the marketing strategies utilised by sport organisations? In this regard, various specific research questions were identified to gather information and insights that would assist in answering the general research question.

In the next section, the research design is explained in terms of the specific research questions in relation to the guiding arguments, concepts, constructs and the research method utilised to answer the general research question.

4.3.2 Concepts and Constructs

The general research design for the study is outlined in this section. Tables are provided that illustrate both the qualitative (Table 4.1 and 4.2) and quantitative (Table 4.3) research methods. The former were semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule (see Annexure D) and content analysis of digital channels. An electronic survey was administered for the quantitative part of the research (see Annexure E). The headings in the tables, namely "specific research question", "guiding arguments", "concepts", "constructs" and "research methods", indicate the comprehensive framework of the research design.

Table 4-1: Concepts and constructs for semi-structured interviews, content analysis and quantitative survey

Semi-Structured Interviews				
Specific Research Question 3	Guiding argument 2	Concepts	Constructs	Semi-structured interviews
What digital marketing strategies are used by sport organisations in South Africa?	The concept of marketing has changed over the years due to the advances in the environment, the market and consumer behaviour. This requires the sport organisation to adapt its marketing approach to relationship building through interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience.	Relationship building	Interactive communication	Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9
			Stakeholder engagement	
			Stakeholder end-to-end experience	
	Guiding argument 3	Concepts	Constructs	Semi-structured interviews
	The focus on tracking progress, achieving goals, organisation workflow and gathering market information is universal in marketing. However, in the context of sport, these activities are rooted in the industry's fast, event-driven cycles and the emotional bonds that stakeholders have with sport teams and athletes. Sport organisations must, therefore, be quick to react, and sensitive to and emotionally connected with their stakeholders. To gain a competitive advantage, they must take a specialised approach to managing their digital strategies, which includes situation analysis, setting objectives, strategy formulation, tactical implementation, action and control.	Digital marketing management	Situation analysis	Q20, Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24
			Setting objectives	
			Determine strategies	
			Tactics	
			Acting	
			Control	
	Guiding argument 4	Concepts	Constructs	Semi-structured interviews
	Digital marketing involves using digital marketing channels such as websites, mobile devices and social media platforms. Sport organisations should, therefore, execute digital marketing campaigns for example on websites and social media channels such as a) Facebook and b) Instagram.	Functionalities of digital marketing	Website as marketplace	Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19
			Social media channels: a) Facebook b) Instagram	

Table 4-2: Research design for content analysis

Content Analysis				
Specific Research Question 4	Guiding argument 5	Concepts	Constructs	Content analysis
How do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of websites, Facebook and Instagram in their digital marketing to build relationships with their stakeholders?	Digital channels are a strategic asset for sport organisations, integrating the functionalities of a website and social media marketing. Sport organisations should, therefore, enhance user interaction and engagement, foster content creation, nurture a sense of community among stakeholders and drive traffic to their website.	Digital integration	User engagement	Websites, email, SEO, display and online advertising, blogs, CRM and social media
			Content creation	
			Community nurturing	
			Traffic generation	

Table 4-3: Research design for quantitative survey

Electronic Survey				
Specific Research Question 5	Guiding argument 2	Concepts	Constructs	Electronic questionnaire
What are sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisations' digital marketing?	The concept of marketing has changed over the years due to the advances in the environment, the market and consumer behaviour. This requires the sport organisation to adapt its marketing approach to relationship building through interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience.	Relationship building	Interactive communication	Q7, Q14, Q15, Q15, Q16, Q17
			Stakeholder engagement	
			Stakeholder end-to-end experience	
	Guiding argument 3	Concepts	Constructs	Electronic questionnaire
	The focus on tracking progress, achieving goals, organisation workflow and gathering market information is universal in marketing. However, in the context of sport, these activities are rooted in the industry's fast, event-driven cycles and the emotional bonds that stakeholders have with sport teams and athletes. Sport organisations must, therefore, be quick to react, and sensitive to and emotionally connected with their stakeholders. To gain a competitive advantage, they must take a specialised approach to managing their digital strategy, which includes situation analysis, setting objectives, strategy formulation, tactical implementation, action and control.	Digital marketing management	Situation analysis	Q6, Q8, Q13, Q18, Q10, Q12,
			Setting objectives	
			Determine strategies	
			Tactics	
			Acting	
			Control	
	Guiding argument 4	Concepts	Constructs	Electronic questionnaire
	Digital marketing involves using the channels of digital marketing such as websites, mobile devices and social media platforms. Sport organisations should, therefore, execute digital marketing campaigns for example through websites and social media channels such as a) Facebook and b) Instagram.	Functionalities of digital marketing	Website as marketplace	Q5, Q6, Q9, Q11
			Social media channels: a) Facebook b) Instagram	

4.4 RESEARCH METHODS

As explained in section 4.2, a multi-methods research approach was followed consisting of qualitative and quantitative research. Firstly, a *literature study* was conducted and presented in chapters 2 and 3. Secondly, *semi-structured interviews* were facilitated with marketers in the sport sectors to obtain specific information about the use of digital marketing in building relationships (see Chapter 5). Thirdly, a *qualitative content analysis* was done over a period of six months, from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022, on sport organisations' digital marketing applications. The aim of the content analysis was to explore the themes derived from the literature to add to the conceptual understanding of the integration of digital marketing channels in relationship building (see Chapter 6). Lastly, as part of the quantitative research, an electronic survey was administrated to measure sport stakeholder's perceptions of the digital marketing strategies used by sport organisations (see Chapter 7).

4.5 SAMPLING OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify the sport organisations and stakeholders. This method of sampling is a form of non-probability sampling, in which stakeholders are selected to serve a specific purpose based on their unique characteristics (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:343; Du Plooy, 2009:114). These stakeholders were chosen because it was believed they could best answer the research questions meaningfully, contribute to the understanding of the research topic and, thus, make it possible to gather rich data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017:147; Curtis & Curtis, 2011:36). First, the sampling of the organisations is described. Second, the selection of stakeholders from these participating organisations is indicated.

The criteria applied for inviting the chosen sport organisations to participate in the study were as follows: the sport organisation should be in the realm of the sport sector, they had to be registered with SRSA, have a governance structure that included a marketing department, attract a large number of participants or spectators and fans, and present on a national level.

The sport organisations that were selected represent the main and popular sporting codes in South Africa (see table 4.4). The principles applied to the first category were sport that catered mainly for individual participants and the events thereof were held once or, in some cases, twice a year. These sporting codes were representative of the three primary sport sectors in the realm of sport, with the non-profit sector being the most prevalent among them (see section 2.4.1.2). A second category was sport played in a competition or league that provides entertainment for spectators and fans, and having matches that were held during a season on a weekly basis.

These sporting codes were also representative of the three sport sectors, but with the corporate sector having the biggest representation. Table 4.4 shows the sampling of the sport organisations chosen for the study.

Table 4-4: Sampling of sport organisations

Sport organisation	Sampling of sport organisations				
	Frequency	Registered at Sport and Recreation SA	Governance/ Marketing Department	National level	Participants/ supporters
Comrades Marathon (Road running)	Annually	X	X	X	X
Dusi Canoe Marathon (Canoeing)	Annually	X	X	X	X
Iron Man SA Triathlon	Annually	X	X	X	X
Two Oceans Marathon (Road running)	Annually	X	X	X	X
Blue Bulls rugby franchise (Rugby)	Seasonal/ Weekly	X	X	X	X
Titans Cricket franchise (Cricket)	Seasonal/ Weekly	X	X	X	X
Mind Sport (E-gaming)	Seasonal/ Weekly	X	X	X	X
Gold Circle (horseracing and betting)	Weekly	X	X	X	X

As seen in Table 4.4, the sport codes selected for the sport events were road running, canoeing and triathlon because they featured individual participation and attracted a huge number of participants, supporters and spectators. These sporting codes were also presented on an annual basis. In this regard, the Comrades Marathon, Dusi Canoe Marathon, SA Iron man and the Two Oceans Marathon were selected. Sport such as rugby, cricket, horseracing and e-sport were also included because they involved competing in a league or competition over a period. They also served as entertainment and attracted great numbers of stakeholders to the stadiums and venues. As indicated in Table 4.4, all the sporting codes are members of SRSA (see section 2.3). The sporting codes are representative of the three interconnected sport sectors and the chosen organisations all have a governance structure with a marketing division and attract national and

international participants or compete at national and international level. In the context of this discussion, the sampling unit can be defined as individual sporting organisations that are actively engaged in marketing strategies, utilising them in their operations.

The interviews were conducted with *sport marketers*, namely the persons who actively worked and were responsible for the sport organisations' digital marketing. The stakeholders chosen for this study were identified for their intense knowledge and expertise in digital marketing within the sport industry. The deliberate selection process is a key feature of a purposive sampling method used to include organisations that are heavily involved in digital marketing. The study aimed to collect detailed and pertinent information directly related to the research questions. It focused on entities that could offer the most informative perspectives on digital marketing strategies and practices in the sport sector. The sport organisations attract many stakeholders. The sample, therefore, provided a holistic mix of sport marketers in these sport organisations who build relationships through digital marketing. The research methods used are explained in detail in the following section.

4.6 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with sport marketers of the identified sport organisations to determine their approach to digital marketing. The rationale for utilising this method, the sampling for the semi-structured interviews, the interview schedule, the interview process and the analysis of the information collected from the interviews are described in detail.

4.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

To determine the strategies and perceptions of the respondents regarding digital marketing for sport in South Africa, the current researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with the marketers of sport organisations, which facilitated interaction with each individual respondent.

A distinction can be drawn between three interview formats: structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. With *structured interviews*, a series of pre-determined questions are drawn up that are answered in the corresponding order. Data analysis tends to be straightforward because researchers can compare the different answers given to the same questions. *Unstructured interviews* are the least reliable form of interview. They are conducted in an informal manner and are associated with a high level of bias. The *semi-structured* interview consists of components of both structured and unstructured interviews. The interviewer prepares a set of the questions for the interviewees and additional questions can be posed during interviews to expand on and clarify a certain issue (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:292; Treadwell & Davis, 2019:79).

Thus, semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in that they do not consist purely of a list of questions but are rather like an open conversation. The interviewer would also leave some room for follow-up questions to clarify certain responses (Du Plooy, 2009:190).

A semi-structured interview also brings together the best characteristics of structured and unstructured interviews by linking the focus of structured interviews with the flexibility of unstructured interviews. This provides a complete picture and understanding of the stakeholders' thoughts and perspective (Hocking & McDermott, 2003:211; Oliver, 2010:106; Struwig & Stead, 2001:98; Treadwell & Davis, 2019:165). Understanding the respondents' experiences and views regarding relationship building utilising digital marketing was significant.

For the semi-structured interviews, a certain relationship must exist between the researcher and the respondent because information is exchanged during the interview in a question-and-answer session. A structured list of open-ended questions based on the knowledge obtained from the theories explained in chapters 2 and 3, were compiled, which would give structure to the interview and assist in posing questions that were relevant and important. To develop a comprehensive framework for digital marketing in the sport sector, it is crucial to have a solid grasp of the current practices and challenges.

4.6.1.1 Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs

A basic interview schedule was compiled as a guideline to establish how sport marketers used digital marketing to build relationships in the marketing of their sport (see Annexure D). Before the empirical questions were determined, the theoretical background to the study had to be stated to ensure that accurate information was obtained. The theoretical information compiled in Chapter 3 was used to develop the interview schedule. As indicated in tables 4.1 and 4.2, the concepts and constructs identified in the literature were used as basis for the interview schedule.

The operational definitions for the constructs were formulated according to the guidelines set out in the literature review in Chapter 3. A summary of the guiding arguments was presented in Table 4.1 above.

4.6.1.1.1 Concept: Relationship building

An important aspect of digital marketing is relationship building, which involves creating and maintaining positive connections through interactive communication, engagement and an end-to-end experience with individuals or groups that have an interest or investment in a sporting event or sport organisation (see section 3.3).

Table 4-5: Constructs of relationship building

Construct	Operational definition
Interactive communication	Interactivity enables the stakeholder to actively participate in the digital marketing experience. For example, by initiating interactive quizzes and surveys, the sport organisation can gather information about the stakeholders' preferences, needs and interests to create more personalised and relevant content, which can help the organisation to build strong relationships with the stakeholders (see section 3.2.1).
Stakeholder engagement	Engagement is the practice of involving stakeholders in organisational activities such as the co-creation of products or services and can be seen as informing stakeholders about matters that affect them. It must be a continuous process and sport organisations must be proactive in reaching out to their stakeholders through websites and social media channels (see section 3.2.1).
Stakeholder end-to-end experience	This is the route a stakeholder takes from the first point of contact with the brand until well after the point of purchase. The stakeholder journey consists of five phases: interest, search, research, conversion and advocacy (see section 3.3.2.1).

4.6.1.1.2 Concept: Digital marketing management

Digital marketing management is dependent on the sport organisation's overall business strategy and describes how the organisation will accomplish a particular mission or goal. It can be seen as the path the sport organisation takes to reach its goals. It usually consists of a situation analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, actions and control (see section 3.4.1).

Table 4-6: Constructs of digital marketing management

Construct	Operational definition
Situational analysis	The audit and assessment of the current digital marketing activities in terms of the current digital stakeholders, internet-specific SWOT analysis, competitor analysis and performance of digital channels (see section 3.4.1.1).
Setting objectives	Determining where the organisation wants to be, including objectives such as increased relationship building, higher brand awareness and recognition, community building and higher conversion rates (see section 3.4.1.2).
Determine strategy	Planning how the sport organisation will attain its objectives. It can be seen as a summary of how to achieve the objectives for the various decision points. Typical strategies are strategic content creation, social media engagement, email marketing and data-driven personalisation (see section 3.4.1.3).

Tactics	Tactics are the actions of the strategy used to attain defined objectives Typical tactics are regular blog posts, videos, podcasts, game highlights, interviews, daily social media posts, live Q&A sessions, themed days and regular newsletters (see section 3.4.1.4).
Actions	Actions are the specific details of tactics, such as who will execute them, when they will be performed and how they will be managed. This involves the creation of action plans, change management and project management skills. They might also include the allocation of responsibilities and the establishment of structures within the sport organisation, including the utilisation of internal resources, skills and external agencies (see section 3.4.1.5).
Control	Control is how performance will be monitored. The focus is on the use of management information to assess whether the strategic and tactical objectives were achieved and what improvements can be made. This includes the use of Google analytics, Facebook insights and social media analytics to track website traffic, page views and clicking through the conversion rate to see which efforts are working, which are not and why they are not working (see section 3.4.1.6).

4.6.1.1.3 Concept: Digital marketing functionalities

The digital marketing campaign consists of various functionalities to establish the sport organisation's online identity, building trust and driving interaction and engagement to achieve the best ROI (see section 3.4.2).

Table 4-7: Construct of functionalities of digital marketing

Construct	Operational definition
Website	A website can be described as the online face of the sport organisation and forms the centre of a digital marketing strategy. The aim is to drive traffic to the website by using the other elements of digital marketing. Websites should, thus, provide a smooth user interface and a user experience with quality content to encourage the stakeholder to return again and again (see section 3.4.2.2).
Social media marketing	The use of social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok to interact and engage with stakeholders, and to produce sharable content that will generate traffic to the sport organisation's website with a view to building relationships with stakeholders (see section 3.4.2.7).

4.6.1.2 Measuring instrument: Interview schedule

The aim of the interview schedule was to give the respondents the opportunity to elaborate freely in their answers to the questions that were posed and to enable the researcher to ask additional questions to clarify the respondent's answers.

The open-ended questions were worded in such a way that they would not prompt the respondents to mention the specific constructs of applying digital marketing in building relationships, as listed in the theoretical conceptualisation list. After the respondents answered, if necessary, the researcher could pose probing questions to find out more about the subject. In this way, greater openness, and deeper insight, as well as a wide range of responses and richer data, could be provided (Du Plooy, 2009:178; Punch, 2013:149).

The interview schedule consisted of questions regarding the background of the sport organisation, relationship building strategies, digital marketing management and the functionalities of digital marketing. The interview schedule was divided into the following categories to obtain specific answers from the respondents:

- Demographic information and background
- Attributes of a digital marketing strategy in terms of sport
- Stakeholder relationship building
- Digital marketing management

A comprehensive pilot study was conducted with three sport marketers to evaluate the relevance of the questions designed for semi-structured interviews. These questions, covering topics such as social listening, the stakeholder journey, and content marketing, were carefully chosen to elicit all necessary information pertaining to the specific concepts under study. Feedback from the sport marketers suggested that the questions were aptly inclusive and relevant, capturing the essential dimensions of the concepts and constructs of interest. Consequently, no recommendations for changes were made, which confirms the effectiveness of the interview schedule as detailed in Annexure D – a structured overview of the questions employed to assess the various concepts and constructs.

4.6.1.3 Interview procedure

The interviews were conducted during July and October 2022. They were conducted online and in English via Microsoft Teams, which offered the option to record the interviews, with the consent of the respondents. The average time of the interviews were approximately 45 minutes.

The interviewees were first engaged in a friendly conversation, during which the purpose and goals of the interview were explained and how the research could be of relevance in the future. The interviewees were informed that the interview and all their answers would be kept confidential and that interviews would be conducted with other sport entities as well. Table 4.8 is a summary of the sport organisations invited to participate in the interviews and those who accepted the invitation.

Table 4-8: Summary of stakeholders invited for the semi-structured interviews

Sport organisation	Outcome	
	Response	No response
Comrades Marathon	X	
Dusi Canoe Marathon	X	
aQuelle Midmar Mile		X
Iron Man SA	X	
Cape Town Cycle Tour		X
Total Sport Two Oceans Marathon	X	
Cape Epic Mountain Bike challenge		X
94.7 Ride Joburg		X
SA Hockey		X
Protea Netball		X
Blue Bulls Rugby franchise	X	
Mind Sport SA	X	
Gold Circle horse racing	X	
Titans Cricket franchise	X	
Orlando Pirates Soccer franchise		X
Kaizer Chiefs Soccer franchise		X

The interview process had difficulties in that some sport organisations were slow to respond or did not respond at all as indicated in Table 4.8. Sixteen sport organisations were contacted by obtaining the contact information of the sport marketing manager on the sporting organisations respective websites. In instances where telephone numbers were available, they were contacted by telephone. In some instances, they were also contacted via Facebook messenger or via their LinkedIn profiles. Invitations with background information about the study were sent by email. Eight of the marketing managers that were invited did not respond to the invitation, despite sending follow-up with emails and WhatsApp messages. Three sport marketers were willing to grant interviews but did not respond to book a date and time for the interview, despite several

follow-ups. Ultimately, nine of the 16 potential participants who were approached were interviewed. Although eight marketers of sport organisations responded, two interviews were conducted with one franchise, one with the chief executive officer (CEO) and one with the sport marketing manager. It so happened that both responded to the invitation, hence the researcher conducted interviews with both.

A point of saturation was reached because the respondents all provided the same information, with some additional information specific to their organisation. All the interviews were transcribed by the researcher in preparation for the analysis of the content.

4.6.1.4 Analysis and interpretation of the data from the interviews

Qualitative relational content analysis was used to process the data from the semi-structured interviews, in which text data was systematically and objectively organised into manageable patterns and trends (Elo *et al.*, 2014:1). The researcher followed a three-step process, namely (1) transcription, (2) repeated analysis and reflection, and (3) presentation of findings.

The researcher began with a manual, verbatim transcription of the accumulated data. Verbatim transcription, that is, word-for-word documentation of audio data from interviews, is an integral yet demanding part of the process (Greenwood *et al.*, 2017:90; McGrath *et al.*, 2019:1004). Despite its tedious nature, verbatim transcription is crucial in qualitative research because it minimises the likelihood of overlooking important observations (Loubere, 2017:2). The reliability of the verbatim method empowers researcher to perform a detailed thematic analysis and thoroughly familiarise themselves with the data, thus leading to a deep understanding of the respondents' perspectives and a more robust analysis and conclusion (Esfehiani & Walters, 2018:3167; Greenwood *et al.*, 2017:90).

All the transcriptions were completed within a week post-interview to ensure the retention of both verbal and non-verbal cues. These cues were integral to the transcriptions, conforming to the standards of the verbatim method (Esfehiani & Walters, 2018:3165).

A Microsoft Word document was created with critical concepts and constructs, serving as an analytical guide for the expansive text data. The manual analysis was done by carefully reading through the transcripts several times and typing the corresponding information on the appropriate page. The corresponding information was then re-analysed to identify the information that would help to answer the specific research questions. The data were then captured on Excel spreadsheets, yielding nine distinct text datasets, one for each sport organisation. The transcripts, while not appended to the study, can be made available to the study examiners upon request.

The second phase entailed an iterative analysis and reflection on the datasets to derive conclusions. The analytic procedure entailed a careful deductive analysis of the interview transcriptions, according to pre-existing constructs (see section 4.4). Upon capturing the data, it was re-assessed to pinpoint facets relevant to the research questions. The data organised in Excel spreadsheets also enabled the development of new thematic insights.

Lastly, in the third phase, the researcher presented the data, discussing, comparing and identifying linkages between the extracted categories and themes. These findings are presented in Chapter 5 of the study.

Data quality was ensured through pilot testing to refine data collection instruments and procedures (see section 4.6.1.2). The interviewer maintained consistency in the data collection process as far as possible, and the data was cleaned by identifying and correcting errors in the dataset. Throughout this process, no difficulties were encountered.

Following the analysis of the interview data, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on the digital marketing channels of the sport organisations to establish how these strategies were applied.

4.6.2 Content analysis of digital marketing functionalities

Du Plooy (2009) points out that content analysis is used to document messages, symbols or themes that appear in the items that are researched. This includes content identified in literature, conversations, emails, meetings and policy documents. Such an analysis can be done in different ways and be applied to various media, such as websites, films and, in the case of this study, social media (Du Plooy, 2009:213). Due to the broad field covered by this type of research, it is widely used by researchers of literature and rhetoric, marketing, psychology and the cognitive sciences.

A content analysis of digital marketing functionalities was conducted to interpret the data derived from the participating sport organisations' digital channels. The data was analysed qualitatively against the theoretical themes identified in the literature (see section 3.5). To this end, the insights derived from the digital channels used provided useful data regarding how sport organisations utilise digital marketing to build relationships with stakeholders.

4.6.2.1 Sampling

The sample for the content analysis derived from the participating sport organisations indicated in Table 4.2. To focus the analysis on the core digital marketing channels of the sport organisation,

namely their websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts, a decision was made to exclude the other channels mentioned in Chapter 3 (see section 3.4). The reason for this was that the sport organisation's websites incorporated various components, such as SEO marketing, email marketing, display, online advertising and blogs, thereby including a significant portion of their overall online presence in marketing efforts.

With regards to social media as one of the digital channels discussed in section 3.4.2.7, Facebook was identified because it was, at the time of the study, the biggest social media channel. Although its popularity was declining, it was still relevant, especially for the older generation of sport stakeholders. Instagram was identified because it enabled users to take photographs and videos, apply filters and share them with their followers. It also had the feature of Instagram Reels and Instagram Stories and of late, Instagram Threats. With Instagram reels, users can create shortform videos, which is 15-second videos set to music that can be shared. A new feature at the time of this study was Instagram threads which allow for short posts and instant updates in real time, as is the case with X (Twitter). Instagram, therefore, resonates with the younger audience and, for this study, was regarded as a combination of features such as photographs and videos, which is also available on other channels, such as X, YouTube, and TikTok.

Table 4-9: Sample for content analysis of sport organisations' digital channels

Identified sport	Website	Facebook page	Instagram account
Comrades marathon	X	X	X
Dusi Canoe marathon	X	X	X
SA Iron Man	X	X	X
Two Oceans Marathon	X	X	X
Blue Bulls rugby franchise	X	X	X
Titans Cricket franchise	X	X	X
Mind Sport E-gaming	X	X	X
Gold Circle horseracing and betting	X	X	X

The purpose of the content analysis was to determine whether the results from the semi-structured interviews correlated with the outcome of the content analysis of the participating sport organisations.

4.6.2.2 Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs

4.6.2.2.1 Concept: Digital integration

Digital integration can be described as the integration of the functionalities of a website and social media marketing. A digital engagement channel is an interactive interface that serves as the public face of an organisation and constitutes the centre of a digital marketing strategy. It leverages the functionalities of social networking sites, allowing individuals and organisations to produce, publish and share content. It is designed to provide informative content that creates a unique experience for stakeholders and to foster communication and relationship building. It delivers online marketing offerings via integrated web and social media channels.

Table 4-10: Constructs of digital integration

Construct	Operational definition
User engagement	The interaction and participation of users on both the website and social media channels. It involves activities such as commenting, sharing, liking and contributing to brand communication activities across these channels and is transactional and immediate (see section 3.2.1).
Content Creation	The production and publication of informative, entertaining and inspiring content across the website and social media channels. It includes formats such as articles, images, blog posts, videos and infographics.
Community nurturing	The establishment and nurturing of long-term relationships with stakeholders through interactive and engaging content on both the website and social media channels. This includes photographs or videos (UGC), quizzes and polls (interactive content), how-to videos, articles about history, or tips to improve performance (educational content), and special deals or early access to tickets (exclusive offers).
Traffic generation	Efforts aimed at driving user traffic to both the website and social media channels; for instance, sharing weblinks. It involves posting information that gets shared by the users and, thus, creates traffic.

4.6.2.3 Analysis of content

The research methodology deployed in this study involved a thorough analysis of the content published on the websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts of the selected sport organisations. This qualitative analysis was underpinned by the theoretical themes defined in table 4.10.

The data collection for this study was conducted manually, necessitating careful examination of the digital content to capture a comprehensive range of elements. The unit of analysis comprised

not only text, but also the functional elements, such as buttons and tabs, visual elements such as photographs, videos, infographics and varying subject matters (see section 3.3.2.3.1). To manage this large volume of varied data efficiently, screenshots were taken, creating a visual record of website pages, social media posts, comments, videos and images within a post. This provided insight into the effectiveness of the sport organisation's digital marketing strategy in terms of the stakeholder journey and experience of the content.

These screenshots were then organised and stored in a dedicated database constructed in Microsoft Word, designed to streamline the subsequent stages of the analysis. This storage method provided a convenient way to categorise and retrieve the data, facilitating its accessibility for detailed scrutiny. The categories derived from the literature study in Chapter 3 and the data were segmented into the following categories:

- Type of content: promotional posts, event announcements, player profiles and highlights.
- Engagement metrics: likes, shares, comments.
- Tone and style: inspirational, humorous, serious, formal or casual.
- Visual elements: use of images, videos and infographics in terms of quality and impact.
- Frequency and timing: how often content is posted and at what times to determine any patterns or strategies behind content scheduling.
- Audience interaction: How the organisation responds to comments, questions or mentions.
- Call to action: the presence of calls to action.

4.6.2.4 Content analysis process

The data for this study was collected over a six-month period, from 1 July 2022 to 31 December 2022. This timeframe was strategically selected to capture a rich variety of digital content. It offered the sport organisations ample time to generate substantial content across their digital channels for marketing purposes.

Regarding events such as the Comrades Marathon, Dusi Canoe Marathon, Iron Man SA and the Two Oceans Marathon, which take place on an annual basis, this six-month period proved to be particularly insightful. It followed the conclusion of these events and the preparatory phase for the subsequent year's events, spanning 2023. Hence, this timing provided a comprehensive perspective of how these organisations leveraged the functionalities of digital marketing to

engage with existing sport stakeholders and attract new ones in both post-event and pre-event contexts. For sport such as rugby, cricket, horseracing and e-sport, which operate on a weekly schedule with frequent games, the selected six-month period covered a significant portion of these competitions, offering an opportunity to study how they utilised digital marketing during active competition periods.

4.6.2.5 Analysis and interpretation of data

The analysis provided a holistic view of the integration of the functionalities of digital marketing on building relationships with their stakeholders. The researcher did not make use of a coding programme but chose to do it manually. The data was subsequently categorised grounded in the themes and constructs that had been previously identified in the literature review (see table 4.2). This systematic categorisation served as a basis for the interpretive analysis that followed, bringing order to the rich, multifaceted data.

In the final phase of analysis, the researcher delved into the interpreted data to draw out valuable insights. Through a careful examination of the categorised data (see section 4.6.2.3), interpretations were made regarding the sport organisations' strategic use of digital channels for relationship building. This interpretation of the data provided helpful perspectives on how these organisations leveraged digital marketing to foster connections, offering valuable insights for both theory and practice in sport digital marketing.

4.7 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

The quantitative approach was followed for the questionnaire on events and team sport, which was distributed to stakeholders to determine their perceptions of the marketing strategies utilised by sport entities.

4.7.1 Electronic survey

With the aim of establishing a framework for digital marketing in the sport sector, it was important to make use of the perspectives and experience of individuals actively engaged in the field. Hence, in the context of this research, an electronic survey was conducted with the aim of collecting relevant information from individuals involved in the sport industry. This was done to ensure that the resulting digital marketing framework was well-informed and in line with the requirements and viewpoints of important stakeholders in the field. The survey was also used to answer the specific research question: *What are sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisation's digital marketing?*

An electronic questionnaire, in which the respondents answer a battery of questions, is an instrument to collect data (Du Plooy, 2009:178). Babbie and Mouton (2012) describe a questionnaire as a document that contains questions and statements to obtain information relevant to a study. It might not have only questions but might also contain declarations and statements, which the respondents can approve or disapprove.

4.7.1.1 Sampling

The population and sample are two crucial factors in the sampling decision. The population encompasses the entire group that could be surveyed, while the sample is a subset of the population that is studied to provide a generalised view of the whole population (Du Plooy, 2009:108; Walliman, 2021:94). The researcher must decide whether to survey the entire population or only a selected group.

For the survey, the convenience non-probability sampling method was applied because the stakeholders were randomly selected due to their accessibility and availability – and because the group of stakeholders were a naturally formed group (Etikan *et al.*, 2016:3).

The basis for selecting respondents is the sample frame, which can consist of people, telephone numbers or addresses. It is important for sampling frames to be up to date, complete and easy to use. They should also be affordable and easily exported into software, such as into spreadsheets or word processing programs. In this study, the sampling frame consisted of sport stakeholders for various sporting codes in South Africa.

The sample size is influenced by various factors such as the purpose of inquiry, what is at stake and what can be done with available time and resources (Neuman, 2014:72). The quality of data, scope of study and nature of topic also affect how much data is needed. The target population was athletes and general participants. For this study, 117 responses were received for factor analysis. Since an availability sample was used instead of a random sample, power calculations were not necessary.

4.7.1.2 Conceptualisation: Operationalising constructs

The operational definitions used in the electronic survey were formulated following the guidelines identified in the literature review, which was thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. These definitions constituted explicit descriptions and meanings of the key constructs and aided in establishing clear parameters for the analysis. A summary of the key arguments that guided the formulation

of these operational definitions was provided in Table 4.4 above. This table served as a valuable reference, consolidating the essential arguments that informed the study's methodology.

The specific concepts that were identified and defined operationally in the study included relationship building, digital marketing management and the functionalities of digital marketing. These concepts were pivotal to the research and were carefully delineated to ensure consistency and accuracy throughout the study.

The comprehensive explanations and the context-specific meanings of these operational definitions were provided in section 4.6.1.1. The detailed explication in this section ensures that these constructs are precisely defined and understood, thereby enabling a coherent and structured analysis aligned with the study objectives.

4.7.1.3 Measuring instrument: Electronic questionnaire

The researcher used predominantly closed questions, which were supplemented with open questions, for which the respondents were requested to add their own comments. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. Table 4.11 gives an indication of the format of the electronic questionnaire (see Annexure E).

Table 4-11: Format of the electronic survey

	Focus area	Options
Section A	Demographic information – Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4.	Mark list
Section B	Digital marketing management - Q6, Q8, Q13, Q18, Q10, Q12.	Mark list
Section C	Digital marketing content experience - Q7, Q14, Q15, Q15, Q16, Q17.	Likert scale
Section D	Behaviour patterns - Q5, Q6, Q9, Q11.	Likert scale

Section A comprised demographic information and section B dealt with digital marketing management, for which the respondents had to indicate their choice with an X. In sections C and D, statements had to be ranked on a Likert scale to determine the extent of the respondents' digital marketing content experience and their behaviour patterns.

The Likert scale is traditionally divided into five or seven categories with two extremes: completely disagree, disagree, agree, fully agree or don't know. However, this approach has a disadvantage because it could lead respondents to follow a certain response pattern, particularly with the inclusion of the "don't know" option. To address this issue and to ensure that the respondents provided accurate answers to questions in this study, only four categories were used: "Not

Important" to "Critical", "Never" to "Always", "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree", "Not Effective" to "Very Effective", and "Very Satisfied" to "Very Unsatisfied".

A formal pilot study was conducted with three athletes involved in road running and triathlon to assess the feasibility and relevance of the questionnaire designed for the study. The purpose of this pilot study was to allow for any necessary adjustments to ensure user-friendliness of the questionnaire. It was concluded from this pilot study that no changes or additions to the questionnaire were required. The three participants were satisfied with the questions as presented and did not suggest any modifications. This outcome suggests a positive validation of the questionnaire's design and content, as detailed in Annexure E.

4.7.1.4 Process of data collection

The questionnaire was administered via Survey Monkey, which is an online survey development cloud-based service by means of which a link is created to the questionnaire, which can be distributed electronically. The objective was to gather data on stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisations' digital marketing strategies. The link was shared on participating sport organisations' Facebook pages on 1 September 2022 and the deadline for submissions was 30 November 2022.

As the link to the questionnaire was online, the respondents could access it electronically. Potential participants were made aware of the questionnaire via the participating sport organisation's Facebook pages. Completion was voluntary and the researcher relied solely on the respondents' initiative and cooperation to complete the questionnaire and submit their responses. The researcher retrieved 117 completed questionnaires.

4.7.1.5 Analysis and interpretation of the data obtained via questionnaires

Data obtained from the electronic survey was analysed using the Statistical (StatSoft Inc., 2013) and SPSS (SPSS Inc., 2013) statistical computer programmes. Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University Potchefstroom campus assisted in the data analysis. The electronic survey results were analysed in terms of each concept mentioned. The initial part presents the descriptive statistics derived from a four-point Likert scale for the items in Section C of the electronic survey (see Annexure D).

4.7.2 Frequency tables

According to Argyrous (2011), frequency analysis is a useful method for summarising data and presenting it in a way that is easy to interpret. It involves counting the number of times a data value occurs and is particularly effective for analysing large amounts of data. For categorical variables, such as demographic data, frequency analysis should involve counting the number of responses for each value of the variable. Frequency analysis can also be used to enhance the clarity of research reports by utilising statistical tables, graphs and images.

In this study, a frequency analysis was conducted for each question, with the number of participants (N) who answered the question being indicated because this varied from question to question.

Response percentages for each question were also provided to enhance the accuracy and interpretability of the information. The frequency distribution was reported using statistical tables.

In the quantitative study, several statistical tests and techniques were employed to analyse the data collected from the electronic questionnaire. These are listed below.

- Descriptive statistics: Used to summarise and describe the basic features of the data, providing simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Descriptive statistics include measures of central tendency (mean, median) and measures of variability (standard deviation, range).
- Factor analysis: A statistical method used to identify the underlying relationships between variables in the dataset. It reduces the data into a smaller set of factors or components that represent the data's structure. Specifically, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Oblimin rotation was mentioned as a technique to extract these factors.
- Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy: This test assesses the appropriateness of factor analysis for the dataset. A KMO value closer to 1 indicates that factor analysis is suitable for the data.
- Bartlett's test of sphericity: This test checks whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that variables are unrelated and unsuitable for structure detection. A significant Bartlett's test ($p < 0.05$) suggests that the variables are related and suitable for factor analysis.
- Cronbach's alpha coefficient: Used to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of the scales or sets of items that make up the factors. A higher Cronbach's alpha value indicates greater reliability.

- Exploratory factor analysis (EFA): Though not explicitly named in the provided texts, the description of the process implies that EFA was used to explore the underlying factor structure without imposing a preconceived structure on the outcome.

These statistical tests and techniques were crucial in analysing the survey data, ensuring the reliability and validity of the scales used, and uncovering the underlying dimensions of the research constructs. By employing these methods, the study was able to systematically investigate the perceptions and behaviours of sport stakeholders in relation to digital marketing, providing a robust foundation for the study's conclusions and recommendations.

4.7.3 Factor analysis

Yong and Pearce (2013) describe factor analysis as a statistical tool designed to uncover the underlying factors explaining the relationships among a collection of observed variables. This technique allows researchers to identify which variables are interconnected and how they associate with certain factors. It's a useful method for exploring the connections between variables and analysing the complex web of interactions among them. Essentially, factor analysis groups variables into clusters or categories to ascertain their association with specific groups. The strength of the relationship between variables and factors, known as factor loadings, ranges between -1.0 and 1.0. Typically, only those factors with the most significant loadings are further examined. This approach helps in simplifying data analysis by focusing on the most impactful relationships.

It is important to have a large enough sample size and a rule of thumb suggests a five to one ratio, involving five observations for every item to be factor analysed. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Barlett's test of sphericity may be used to evaluate the factorability of data. When KMO calculates a value higher than 0.6 and the Barlett's test of sphericity is significant, it typically indicates sample adequacy (Malhotra *et al.*, 2016:643).

Following factor extraction, interpreting and naming the factors based on their factor loadings might present a challenge. To eliminate this obstacle, Field (2013) suggests factor rotation. Two key categories of rotation methods are identified: orthogonal and oblique. With orthogonal rotation, the variables are kept independent, while oblique rotation indicates the relatedness and interdependence of the variables.

In this study, the factor loadings of the constructs were calculated and only the factors with the highest loading were analysed. The higher the value, the more information a specific factor explained the answers to the questions in the questionnaire. The principal component analysis

was conducted with Oblimin Axis Rotation to extract the factors. The questions regarding digital marketing management were divided into 19 factors, which could be withdrawn according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria. The factor analysis of Section C (digital marketing content experience) and Section D (behaviour patterns) were used together.

In this study, factor analysis was employed for the purpose of examining the relationships between variables pertaining to concepts that could not be directly measured with ease. This method aids in condensing a wide array of variables into a smaller set of comprehensible underlying factors. Factor analysis aids in uncovering the latent factors that the scale intends to measure. By grouping together variables that are highly correlated, it indicates that these variables share a common underlying construct, supporting the scale's content and construct validity. Factor analysis was specifically used on the data gathered from the electronic survey to detect patterns, streamline the quantity of elements under study to a more manageable figure, and examine their interconnections.

The factors identified in the study include various constructs related to digital marketing in the context of sports. Factors were derived relating to stakeholders' perceptions and interactions with digital marketing strategies employed by sport organisations. Factors identified are provided below.

- Digital communication effectiveness: stakeholders' perceptions of how effectively sport organisations communicate with their audience through digital platforms.
- Engagement and interactivity: the level of engagement and interactivity stakeholders experience with the sport organisations' digital content, including social media interactions, email communications, and website functionalities.
- Content relevance and quality: stakeholders' views on the relevance, quality, and appeal of the digital content provided by sport organisations, including how informative, entertaining, and inspiring they find the content.
- Trust and transparency: stakeholders' trust in the digital communications of sport organisations and their perceptions of transparency and authenticity in digital marketing efforts.
- User experience and accessibility: stakeholders' experiences with the usability and accessibility of digital platforms used by sport organisations, including websites and social media channels.
- Community building and sense of belonging: how digital marketing strategies foster a sense of community and belonging among stakeholders, encouraging loyalty and long-term engagement.

- Conversion and traffic generation: reflect the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in generating relevant traffic to digital platforms and leading to meaningful conversions.

4.7.4 T-test

According to Malhotra *et al.* (2016), a *t*-test is a statistical analysis technique used to test differences between means of the population being studied. The *t*-test determines whether the difference between two groups' averages most likely reflects a “real” difference in the population from which the groups were sampled.

There are three main types of *t*-tests: the one-sample *t*-test, the two-independent-sample *t*-test, and the paired samples *t*-test. The paired samples *t*-test was used in this study to compare two groups or values that were related to each other because the respondents completed both the sections dealing with relationship communication and marketing communication. Malhotra *et al.* (2016) describe the paired samples *t*-test as a statistical analysis technique used for testing differences between mean scores for more than two independent samples. In this study, a *t*-test was used to indicate the effect or influence of gender on the identified factors as the *p*-value was smaller than 0.05, which indicates a statistically significant difference.

4.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

The study carefully established precise definitions for the constructs by thoroughly examining existing literature and creating an interview schedule, which provided a strong theoretical basis for each construct being studied. The comprehensive approach was enhanced by using an electronic survey to empirically test these constructs. The electronic survey helped collect data from a wide and varied sample, validating operational definitions against real-world perceptions and experiences. This enhanced the study's reliability and validity in measuring digital marketing strategies in sport in South Africa.

4.8.1 Validity of the study

The extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the true meaning of the concept under consideration is referred to as “validity” (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:124; Du Plooy, 2009:90). The question is, does the researcher measure what should be measured? The trustworthiness of qualitative research can also be described as validity (Suter, 2011:347). However, because the social sciences involve humans, they are always susceptible to human influence and error. Content validity, the use of triangulation, mitigating researcher bias, code verification and the

timeframe for data collection all contributed to the validity of this qualitative study and inspired confidence in the findings.

Criterion-related validity, also known as “predictive validity”, is based on external criteria and describes the extent to which a specific aspect can be predicted. In this study, the validity was determined by examining the interrelatedness of the approaches of the sport marketers to the sport organisation’s digital marketing and sport stakeholder’s perceptions of the digital marketing followed by sport organisations.

4.8.1.1 Construct validity

The validity of interviews can sometimes be questioned because they have a strong qualitative perspective and constructs could be applied rigidly (Gray, 2021:388). For a semi-structured interview, validity can be assured by focusing on the research objectives when designing and planning the questions. In this study, this was done by designing the interview schedule (see Annexure E). As previously noted, the researcher focused on thematically analysing and identifying themes and patterns within the qualitative data. To ensure validity, the data was recorded on Microsoft Teams as well as on a mobile phone to prevent data from being lost or added to the interviewee’s recording. As noted above, these recorded interviews were transcribed fully verbatim to further ensure validity. The constructs used in this study derived from existing literature to ensure the validity of the research findings.

The construct validity of the scale used in the study was achieved through factor analysis, a statistical method that identifies groups or clusters of related variables from a larger dataset (Malhotra *et al.*, 2016:643). This process assists in understanding the underlying structure of data by reducing a large number of variables into a smaller number of factors or constructs. In the context of this study, factor analysis was utilised to test the relationships and perceptions of sport stakeholders regarding various aspects of digital marketing, ensuring that the scales or sets of questions in the survey accurately measured the theoretical constructs they were intended to.

Construct validity is based on the logical relations among variables (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:124). Factor analysis was used to indicate the interrelatedness of the variables.

4.8.1.2 Content validity

Content validity refers to the degree to which a measure covers the range of meanings included within a concept (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:123). This study’s content is valid because the various components of digital marketing, namely relationship building, digital marketing management and

the functionalities of digital marketing were discussed in the literature review in Chapter 3. The relevant aspects of the digital marketing strategy of sport organisations were discussed using derived constructs to establish the perceptions sport stakeholders.

4.8.1.3 Face validity

Face validity refers to the extent to which a test subjectively measures what it purports to measure (Holden, 2010:2). As the perceptions of sport stakeholders on the digital marketing strategy of sport organisations were measured, the perceptions of sport stakeholders can be viewed as having a strong face validity and a valid means of measuring perceptions of sport organisation's digital marketing strategies.

4.8.1.4 Timeframe validity

Timeframe validity refers to the validity of the study in relation to the time that has elapsed since the research was conducted and the outcomes and possibilities for further studies. It involves carefully considering timing in both the design and execution of a study to ensure that the results are relevant and accurate relative to the data collection period (David & Sutton, 2010:268). In this study, data collection for the electronic survey took place between September and November 2022. This timeframe ensured that the data collection matched what was being studied and could account for temporal elements when examining changes over time. It, thus, provided a clear picture of the phenomena at a specific point, which is essential for the study's timing accuracy and relevance. The study, thus, adhered to the principles of timeframe validity, ensuring that the data collection and analysis were precisely aligned with the relevant period to accurately reflect the current state of digital marketing strategies in sport.

4.8.1.5 Internal and external validity

It is also important to distinguish between internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the extent to which a study can account for all other factors on which data may or may not have been collected that might affect the outcome of the research question to be answered (Rosenthal, 2018:18). External validity refers to the extent to which findings can be generalised to larger populations and applied to different settings. The results of this study were internally valid because several research methods were used to measure the concepts.

4.8.1.6 The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the internal validity of the empirical part of the study and to compile associations between the variables to establish the extent to which the items could be grouped. The Cronbach's C is premised on the principle that a large number of constructs need to be investigated to indicate their validity.

As Urdan (2016) explains, the Cronbach's Alpha varies between 0 and 1.0, where 0 is low and 1.0 is high. This implies that data from factors with a Cronbach's Alpha of .700 and above are reliable and acceptable. For the factor analysis, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.69 and higher, indicating reliability.

Validity in this study on digital marketing strategies in South African sport was ensured by verifying that the methods and instruments employed accurately measured the digital marketing phenomena and strategies under investigation. The process involved expert validation of the survey instruments, statistical analysis of the constructs, and meticulous consideration of the study design to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the findings in the broader context of sport marketing.

4.8.2 Reliability of the study

Reliability refers to whether a particular technique, if applied repeatedly to the same object, will produce the same result each time. The key is the stability and consistency of the results if the study were to be repeated (Babbie & Mouton, 2012:125). According to Curtis and Curtis (2011), reliability measures the extent to which the analysis of data yields reliable results that can be repeated or reproduced at different times or by different researchers. Rosenthal (2018) also suggest that reliability can be determined through correlations.

In qualitative research, such reliability depends on the process that was followed, as well as the interpretation of the results (Du Plooy, 2009:121). In the case of the current study, the research process included conceptualising the research (literature review), collecting data (semi-structured interviews) and analysing (content analysis) information based on the literature. The literature review, which formed the background and theoretical basis for the digital marketing framework, was presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Semi-structured interviews with marketers of sport organisations were used to examine this framework. The semi-structured interview's results were organised according to the themes, main theoretical concepts and associated constructs identified in chapter 3. Content analysis was used to process the interviews.

For the quantitative data, Spearman order correlations were done to indicate the connections between the factors in the quantitative questionnaires. The correlation coefficient was used as an indication of the relationship between the variables, which made it possible to establish how the value of one variable related to the value of another. Correlations specify the interrelatedness of the factors, where .01 indicates a small correlation, .3 a medium correlation, and .5 a high correlation.

Reliability and validity were therefore established through carefully designed research instruments, utilising an interview schedule (qualitative analysis) and an electronic survey (quantitative analysis) to ensure that the instruments accurately captured the relevant aspects of digital marketing practices, stakeholder perceptions and outcomes.

4.9 ETHICS OF THE STUDY

Research ethics refers to how the research was formulated and clarified, and whether the research topic, the design of the research and gaining access, data collection, processes and storing of the data, data analyses and the write-up of the research findings were dealt with in a moral and responsible manner.

During this study, the following ethical issues were considered:

- The study was approved by the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of North-West University: NWU-01019-20-A7.
- The interview participants were contacted via email and thoroughly briefed in advance about the purpose, duration, methods and intended uses of the research. It was explained to them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Regarding the electronic survey, it was completed anonymously to ensure the confidentiality of the participants.
- The names of the interview participants were kept confidential and only the researcher and the promotor(s) had access to the transcribed interviews. The data were safeguarded by storing them securely to protect the researcher and the institution from legal repercussions related to data privacy, informed consent and intellectual property rights.
- The researcher maintained research integrity by not being selective in what to report and by maintaining objectivity when conducting data analysis and interpretation. This ensured the study's credibility and that the researcher upheld the highest standards of academic integrity and professional conduct.

The abovementioned ethical considerations ensured that the research met academic standards and contributed to the body of knowledge in the field of digital sport marketing.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter comprised a description of the multi-methods research approach and the research methods used in this study. The benefits and limitations of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were noted and a detailed description was provided of the qualitative semi-structured interviews, qualitative content analysis and the quantitative electronic survey used in the research. The author also explained how these methods were applicable to the study and clarified the reliability and validity of the study.

The captured data were analysed using the IBM SPSS system by the Statistical Consultation Services on the Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University. The statistical methods applied to the empirical data sets included frequencies, factor analyses, reliability and validity analysis, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient and an independent-samples *t*-test.

In Chapter 5, the research findings from the qualitative research results are presented and analysed. This includes the findings from an in-depth analysis of the data gathered from the semi-structured interviews conducted with sport marketers about the digital marketing strategies followed by sport organisations.

CHAPTER 5 DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT MARKETERS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, the complexity of the sport sectors in South Africa was investigated and their interconnectedness was pointed out as one of the reasons for which sport is unique. Furthermore, it was stated that three factors influenced sport, namely the uniqueness of the sport environment, the evolution of new technology and the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought about lasting changes to sport in South Africa. It was also indicated that within this context, sport marketing is based on three pillars namely the marketing of sport, the marketing through sport and the marketing by sport.

In Chapter 3 it was argued that, because of the complexity of sport, sport organisations should focus on building relationships with stakeholders by following a stakeholder centric approach interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end-experience to name a few (see paragraph 3.3) This should be done through managing a digital marketing strategy and integrating the functionalities of digital marketing.

In this chapter, the results of the semi-structured interviews are presented to answer the third specific research question 1.4.3:

What digital marketing strategies are used by sport organisations in South Africa?

The results will be discussed in an integrated manner to provide a holistic view of marketer's opinions regarding their use of user engagement, content creation, community nurturing and traffic generation. No distinctions were made between sport events and team sport because the aim of the study was not to compare sport events and team sport. The findings are presented according to the guiding arguments, defined concepts and constructs as set out in Chapter 4, Table 4.2, with a view to refining a digital sport marketing framework for sport in South Africa.

5.2 OPINIONS ON DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY SPORT MARKETERS

The digital marketing approach implemented by sport marketers was discussed according to the concepts of relationship building, digital marketing management and the functionalities of digital marketing.

5.2.1 Relationship Building

Building relationships, as indicated in the literature (see section 3.3) was understood as creating, maintaining and enhancing long-term relationships with stakeholders for mutual benefit. In the case of sport and in the hosting of events, there are many stakeholders, such as fans, supporters, participants, sponsors, local authorities, and medics to name a few. For this research, “stakeholders” will refer to participants, fans or supporters.

5.2.1.1 Interactive communication

Interactive communication implies two-way communication, in that the organisation listens to stakeholder’s needs and using that information in further communication (see section 4.7.1.2.1).

All the interviewees believed that they listened to their stakeholders. They motivated that they made use of post-event surveys to obtain information from them. Information was also obtained through social media channels when monitoring comments and direct messages. All the marketers that were interviewed also specified that they were contacted through a “contact us” section available on their websites, as well as a dedicated email address that stakeholders could use to either inquire about certain matters or lodge a complaint. Inquiries and complaints were responded to by the digital team or persons appointed for that purpose.

The respondents viewed interaction as asking for their stakeholders’ opinions and using that information to manage expectations through surveys, questionnaires and posts on social media. One respondent remarked that they used Facebook to get feedback as a two-way communication channel with their stakeholders: *“We try to get our stakeholders to tell their stories and share it on Facebook.”* P1 remarked that “It was, however, a challenge to get them to participate and offer their opinions.”

However, they also indicated that although the options to contact them were present, feedback was not readily forthcoming and that surveys were expensive. Because of the many channels, managing and monitoring could be difficult because of capacity.

5.2.1.2 Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement is the practice of involving stakeholders in organisational activities in the co-creation of products and services by enlightening them about aspects that affect them and encouraging a response (see section 4.7.1.2.1).

All the respondents believed they engaged with their stakeholders on a regular basis by means of social media updates, responding to comments and direct messages on social media, the regular distribution of electronic newsletters and personalising emails. One respondent was of the opinion that their engagement started with the promoting of the event on their website and social media channels; for example, with a countdown clock and announcements when entries would open with a call-to-action, encouraging stakeholders to enter for the event. Other means were UGC, the profiling of athletes, posts about the history of the event and encouraging stakeholders to make comments and share information. This was done well before the event took place and continued until well after the event. The reason was that they hosted only one event per year. They viewed engagement, thus, as part of the build-up to the event, which started three to four months before it took place and continued well afterwards: *“Compared to other sport, like rugby, soccer and cricket, events like the Comrades are just a once in a year and we need to make the most of it.”*

With events that are played on a weekly basis during the season, the interviewees were of the opinion that engagement on the digital channels started on a Monday and reached a high right before the match was played on a Saturday. This is done by creating posts on ticket sales, calls to action, creating a competition to guess the scores, showing highlights of previous encounters and profiling players. Post-match engagement took the form of interviews of players and coaches and highlights of the game. “The cycle then started again on a Monday.” It could, thus, be ascertained that these differing cycles required tailored strategies and resources allocations.

It is interesting that online discussion forums or chat rooms were not mentioned when talking about how users interacted with the websites. This could mean that these kinds of features were not built into these websites or were not noticeable enough for the respondents to notice them. This lack of forums and chat rooms could mean that the fans and stakeholders missed out on chances to interact with each other more deeply and in real time, driven by the community.

It could also mean that the way digital marketing is done now is not taking full advantage of all the ways that users can be engaged. These channels are usually excellent for building a sense of community and loyalty among fans because they enable them to talk to each other directly and share thoughts, opinions and even complaints. Another reason could be that user engagement is changing. People might be more interested in other ways to interact and consume content, possibly on completely different channels.

5.2.1.3 Stakeholder end-to-end experience

Stakeholder end-to-end experience is the route a stakeholder takes from the first point of contact with the sport organisation until well after the event or match or point of purchase (see section 4.7.1.2.1).

Six out of the eight respondents believed that they provided their stakeholders with an end-to-end experience. In this regard, the respondents representing the sport events viewed the end-to-end experience as starting from the time a participant decided to enter until well after the event. This was done through their websites, which was basically a one-stop hub populated with all the information a visitor would need, such as online entries, collecting of race numbers and road closures, to name a few. Social media channels were used to drive traffic to the website with corresponding information and calls to action. *“We strive to provide an impeccably organised ultramarathon that meets the needs of the runners and provides an exciting and enjoyable experience. We aim to make the entire journey, from the time entries open to the race day, a memorable experience for the runners.”*

The respondents representing sport teams believed it was by creating excitement and entertainment and making it easy for stakeholders to buy tickets for the upcoming events: *“We create a hype for a game, sell tickets and ensure a great experience at the stadium.”* It was also stated that the stakeholder end-to-end experience should be looked at holistically, rather than focusing only on the day of the event or match. It could be a challenge to provide a consistent experience throughout the journey.

It was mentioned that they had identified touchpoints in the stakeholder journey and had tailored their content and communication accordingly. The respondents viewed updating their websites so that stakeholders would get the newest information, creating user-friendly portals for stakeholders to enter for the event or buy tickets for the match, posting information on parking at the event or stadium and entertainment as important touchpoints in the stakeholder end-to-end experience. As one participant exclaimed, *“The experience is not what happened to you, but how you’ve reacted to it.”* Although the respondents indicated that they knew what a touch point and the stakeholder journey were, it was not clear from the interviews how they were used in their marketing approach because it seems that it was only a checklist of tasks that should be done. It was indicated that to find that balance between providing that experience with the right content was difficult to balance and that they did not always manage to do that.

One stakeholder from a team sport indicated that although they played a part in attracting spectators and fans to the stadium, they focused more on the entertainment part of it. This was

because the stadium could only take, for argument's sake, 50,000 spectators and their fan base was around 2.4 million people in the country and globally. By providing an end-to-end experience through relevant content to *"those millions of people, the stadium fills up by itself"*. The entertainment that was mentioned was in the form of profiling of players on social media, showing a player while training in the gym or a practice session. *"It is about showing what is happening off the field."*

It was mentioned that if stakeholders obtained a positive experience, they would become the organisation's advocates and indirectly market the event or match for it. In this regard, one of the respondents involved in a sport team stated that their team went through a bad time, failing to win any big competitions: *"From 2010 to 2020, we couldn't win anything; we were really bad. In that time, it was amazing how our brand still grew because we kept on providing content that resonated with everyone, not only our fans. Everyone could still experience the brand during bad times. So, the traction was still there."*

All the respondents, except for one, specified that they were badly influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and that they had to resort to new means of providing an experience for their stakeholders. The most common was hosting virtual events and showing the experience on all social channels. For instance, having interviews with coaches on how to train in isolation, profiling well-known sport athletes, showing scenes on how teams train, doing throwbacks on social media of previous games and many more. In this way, sport organisations managed to still provide an experience without hosting an actual event. This was also one of the lasting trends of COVID-19 because it was an approach that they were still following.

In summary, it can be specified that although organisations recognise the significance of two-way communication, obtaining feedback from stakeholders was identified as a challenge. While the organisations sought to involve stakeholders in co-creation processes such as surveys to obtain their input, it was difficult to motivate active participation and was cited as being costly. This could be due to a variety of factors, including apathy among the stakeholders, a lack of time or the absence of distinct incentives. The stakeholders also communicated with organisations through channels such as direct messages on social media, "contact us" sections on websites and dedicated email addresses. Managing and monitoring a multitude of channels was also mentioned as being difficult. By encouraging the stakeholders to share their stories on channels such as Facebook, one organisation attempted to harness the power of storytelling. Again, this can be an effective engagement tool, but convincing stakeholders to participate was challenging.

In the case of sport teams, engagement peaked on match days and declined until the following week, when it resumed. This cyclical nature made it difficult to maintain consistent engagement

levels and effectively allocate resources. The interviewees also recognised that engagement was not solely about delivering content to stakeholders, but also about listening to them and involving them. This mindset is essential, but it can be difficult to strike the correct balance between listening and informing.

Whether annual or weekly, the frequency of sporting events required organisations to adapt their engagement strategies. For annual events, the difficulty lay in maintaining stakeholder engagement throughout the year, whereas for frequent events, the difficulty lay in preventing stakeholder fatigue. It is essential to use feedback from stakeholders to manage expectations. Nonetheless, filtering through feedback, ranking it, and transforming it into actionable insights can be a daunting task.

While most of the respondents believed they offered an end-to-end experience, the definitions of this experience varied, indicating a lack of standardisation. Some respondents indicated that the end-to-end experience should not be limited to the day of the event or match, suggesting that it might be difficult to provide a consistent and comprehensive experience before, during and after an event. Even though they identified contact points and tailored their content accordingly, it was unclear beyond a checklist how these touchpoints were integrated into their marketing strategy.

The interviewees acknowledged the significance of creating content that resonated with their audience, but occasionally struggled to find the optimal balance. One respondent mentioned the difficulty of having a small stadium capacity relative to an exceptionally larger audience base. This necessitated alternative engagement strategies for admirers who could not attend in person.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented sport organisations with a formidable obstacle. They were required to rapidly adapt to the new circumstances, discover alternative ways to engage fans and shift their strategies to virtual channels. This required adaptability, originality and quick decision-making.

5.2.2 Digital marketing management

The sport organisation's digital marketing strategy flows from the overall business strategy and contributes to attaining the organisation's mission or goal. A digital sport marketing strategy is the path the sport organisation will take to reach its goals. It consists of campaigns, content, channels and marketing software to execute that mission and track its success (see section 3.4.1).

5.2.2.1 Situation analysis

A situation analysis is an audit and review of existing digital marketing initiatives that takes into account the perspectives of current digital stakeholders. This involves a SWOT analysis, a comprehensive competitor analysis and an evaluation of the available digital channels to determine the effectiveness of the overall digital marketing strategy (see section 3.4.1.1).

All the interviewees were well versed about the environment in which they functioned and who their target market and stakeholders were. For sport events, they identified their target market as mostly the participants in the event and their supporters and families, volunteers, sponsors, staff, media, the local government and tourists. For team sport, their target market was their fans and supporters, sponsors, local government, the players, the media and the entertainment fraternity. As stated in section 2.5.1, the diversity of stakeholders is one of the factors that influence the sport industry. Balancing the needs and expectations of each could pose a challenge for the sport organisation.

They mentioned that all the identified event and team sport were managed by a board consisting of a chairperson or president with a CEO and a typical portfolio of finances, race or match directors and marketing officers. It can, therefore, be expected that a proper situation analysis of the environment had been done, particularly since they were dealing with big sponsors, which involves big budgets.

In terms of competition in the market, the respondents who dealt with sport events believed they were not influenced by competitors: *"We are not really influenced by competitors as our event is presented annually and one of the highlights on the sport calendar. The only place where competition could play a role is when it comes to sponsorships."* However, the respondents who dealt with team sport viewed competition and the winning factor as important: *"Our target market is focused on fans and supporters and to get them to the stadium."* While some respondents who marketed sport events felt they faced little competition, this could lead to complacency in keeping their marketing strategies fresh and competitive.

Two out of the eight interviewees who dealt with sport events stated that they had done an economic impact study together with the tourism department to determine what their organisation's economic impact was on their respective cities, signifying the direct role that the government sector plays in facilitating and benefiting from sport events (see section 24.1.1).

5.2.2.2 Objectives

“Objectives” refers to determining where the organisation wants to be and KPIs to be attained, such as number of site visits, bounce rate, page views and number of shares, to enable measurement and monitoring (see sections 3.4.1.2, section 4.7.1.2.2).

All the respondents believed that their main objective was to either attract more and new stakeholders to their events or, in the case of team sport, to fill up the stadiums. They felt that retaining existing stakeholders or supporters was also one of their objectives: *“The Two Oceans aims to increase our number of participants and we measure it by the increase in sign-ups each year.”* Another participant viewed it as *“converting clicks into entries”*.

The four respondents who dealt with sport events believed that attracting top athletes was crucial because their participation not only drew larger crowds, but also facilitated attracting sponsorships and securing live broadcasting deals. As one of the respondents remarked, *“These factors contribute to the financial viability and overall success of the event.”* Marketers of teams and events, thus, want to increase participation and fill stadiums, but it is difficult to strike the balance between fan engagement and revenue generation.

One of the respondents involved in a sport event emphasised the importance of brand growth and having a presence in the market as an important objective because this increased the potential for achieving target goals, such as a specific number of event entries. He further indicated that these activities had a cyclical effect: *“Hosting a successful event raises the profile of your sport, which in turn attracts better athletes, bigger crowds, more sponsorships and more media coverage for future events. Consequently, the brand grows stronger, the footprint of the event expands and the cycle continues, establishing the event as a significant player in the sport industry.”*

Five of the respondents also mentioned engaging with stakeholders, creating an experience for fans, maintaining a digital media presence, enhancing the stakeholder journey and promoting horse racing: *“Our aim is to promote the sport of horse racing, not just as a betting activity, but as a sport that people can enjoy watching.”* Another remarked, *“We communicate with the paddlers through social media channels and direct email campaigns, driving them to enter the event.”*

5.2.2.3 Strategy

Strategy is typically to raise awareness, supporting a cause, providing information, persuading stakeholders to act and turning them into loyal advocates (see sections 3.4.1.3, section 4.1.2.2).

Following from the objectives discussed above, all the respondents believed that their strategy was to provide relevant content and stressed the importance of a content marketing strategy. As one respondent involved in a team sport put it, *“We have reinvented our marketing strategy to focus more on content.”* Another sport event respondent stated, *“Content is king; we have an extensive content strategy in place to build trust and be authentic as a sport organisation.”* While content is deemed king, the challenge is to produce high-quality, relevant content consistently without overwhelming the audience. This content varied, depending on the channel they used. Some of the attributes mentioned were in-depth articles about previous winners, who offered tips, supported with video tutorials and expert interviews. The history of the sport was also displayed on their websites, with interactive infographics. Other content mentioned was live webinars giving advice on nutrition and training.

One of the respondents indicated that their strategy was focused on three main pillars, which formed the core of their event strategy: *“Our events are centred on (sic) three key pillars – horseracing, entertainment and fashion. For events like the Durban July, we aim to reach a broader audience, making it not just a horse racing event, but a grand spectacle of entertainment and fashion as well.”*

Three out of the eight respondents mentioned that they attempted to have a strong media and digital presence and had established strong connections with both South African and international media, *“which has helped to drive the event’s messaging to all stakeholders”*. They tailored their strategy to the strength of each media channel, posting content with the unique value of each channel. One of the respondents stated that they distributed content that was of interest to their audience, being careful to balance the needs of their diverse audience members: *“We have specific accounts set up for different aspects of our business to ensure they are providing relevant content to each audience segment.”*

One respondent from a team sport also viewed “maintaining momentum” and “pushing boundaries” as one of their marketing strategies: *“Regardless of whether we win or lose, we never stop pushing and not losing momentum.”* He indicated that they were not afraid to take risks and push the boundaries in their marketing efforts. *“We are open to trying (sic) new things and reviewing our strategies.* Although impressive, these statements were vague. The lack of resources can also hamper the effective implementation of such broad objectives.

5.2.2.4 Tactics

Tactics refer to the specific details or concrete steps that will be taken to execute the strategy and achieve the defined objectives of interacting and engaging with stakeholders (see section

3.4.1.4). Typical tactics are the creation and distribution of specific types of content (such as social media posts, blog articles or video content), the use of certain marketing channels (such as e-newsletters, display or online advertising, e-commerce, or direct mail) or the implementation of specific promotional activities (such as sales promotions, public relations initiatives or events).

All the interviewees mentioned that they made use of the main social media channels, namely Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. These channels were used to distribute content, communicate and interact and engage with stakeholders to create awareness and interest. One respondent who was involved in team sport mentioned that they had event-specific channels in that each event they hosted had its own social media channel: *“We have a specific channel; for instance the Hollywood Bets Durban July event, which speaks specifically to the event and audience.”* Two of the respondents also indicated that they had implemented a TikTok channel as a tactic to keep up with the newest marketing trends and to reach the younger generation.

All the respondents also believed that the most important channel for them was their sport organisation’s website because this was the “hub” which everything leads to and where everything comes together. They used their social media channels to direct visitors to their websites, where they would find all the answers to their questions. *“We use our social media channels as funnels to drive stakeholders to our website to enter the event.”* Therefore, they understood the importance of a well-established and updated website that would provide a user experience (see section 3.4.2.1).

In addition, five out of the eight respondents indicated that they made use of digital advertising to create awareness and interest, especially Facebook for Business, or Meta Business Suite, as it is currently known, or Facebook and Instagram and the Twitter scheduling tool. Although not specifically mentioned by all the respondents, two of them mentioned that they boost posts selectively to increase their reach.

All the respondents believed that an e-Newsletter or direct email was a key tactic in their marketing efforts because it offered a direct method of engagement with stakeholders, supporters and others, such as sponsors. Through this channel, they provided timely updates on upcoming events, news about the team or event, profiling of players, promotion of tickets and other relevant content. *“Our e-Newsletter offers an ideal channel for driving ticket sales, running promotions on merchandise and engaging with sponsors.”*

Two of the interviewees mentioned that they utilised a CRM system to automate their processes. Thus, when stakeholders register or enter for an event, their data is captured on the system,

which makes future communication much easier: *“With our CRM system, we can communicate directly with our prospective stakeholders by sending them relevant information and correspondence.”* The use of CRM systems can make communication more efficient, but the amount of data to manage and analyse can be overwhelming.

One interviewee from a sport event specified that they also engaged in direct marketing by hosting live information sessions or informal clinics, in which they could engage face-to-face with stakeholders. The aim was to attract new stakeholders and retain existing ones. During these sessions they provided athletes’ tips and training advice to novices and information on what to expect on the day of the event.

5.2.2.5 Actions

As stated in Chapter 3, section 3.4.1.5, “actions” are described as the details of how and by whom, and the tactics. Thus, campaigns are going to be executed and involve plans and change-project management skills. They also involve the personnel that will be responsible for implementing and executing the strategy through campaigns.

All the respondents mentioned that they had a digital marketing team that was responsible for implementing and executing the various campaigns. They also indicated that they formed part of executive management and that they were listened to. As one team sport marketer stated, *“Quite often we will fail with things around our digital marketing, but our board has given us a mandate to take some chances to be relevant and to evolve.”*

The respondents also asserted that their campaigns were planned according to the market research that was conducted and that meetings and planning sessions were held with the digital marketing team and other role-players about how to implement campaigns.

Six out of the eight respondents indicated that their digital marketing teams were not necessarily very big and, therefore, many of the tasks and actions were being outsourced, such as the sourcing of video content, website design and an app. As one respondent exclaimed, *“We really have a few good service providers that we use in our content creation.”* The outsourcing of tasks due to small digital marketing teams could, however, lead to control issues or misalignment with core strategies.

5.2.2.6 Control

Control in the context of the digital marketing management is how performance is measured and monitored. All the respondents stated that they measured performance by monitoring how certain

posts performed in terms of interaction and engagement. The main metrics they looked at were follower growth, post-reach, impressions, the engagement rate and the number of shares. Furthermore, they used the available analytic tools for each channel, such as Facebook Insights, Twitter analytics, Instagram Insights and Google analytics, to name but a few (see section 3.4.1.6).

All the respondents mentioned that they utilised media monitoring tools such as Newsclip, Market IQ, Meltwater and Hootsuite to help with analysis and to understand how their events and activities were being covered and perceived. These monitoring tools included additional functions such as brand tracking, social listening and sentiment. They indicated that they used this information to make informed decisions when they had to adapt their campaigns. As one respondent remarked, *“We use Meltwater to track and manage pretty much everything we do. It gives us numbers and figures on our marketing efforts, such as the number of engagements across social media. We can tell, without guessing, that going into December, the Bulls had 138 million engagements across our social media channels. This is because we get these numbers every morning in reports sent straight to our email.”*

All the interviewees stated that they disseminated post-event reports and surveys to get feedback from their stakeholders about the quality of the event and what elements they could improve on. In this way, they knew what adjustments to make for the next event. Although post-event reports and surveys offer valuable insights, it was not clear how effectively these insights were incorporated into future strategies.

One a sport event interviewee mentioned that they made use of Nielsen Sport to measure the television and radio footprint and the value created by sponsorships during live broadcasts to maximise and provide greater ROI to rights holders and brands. Although it was only mentioned by one interviewee, it can be assumed that the metrics provided by Nielsen Sport are also used by the other participating sport organisations because they also receive broad television coverage.

Mention was made in section 5.2.2.1 of situation analysis. Two respondents conducted an economic impact study in collaboration with their local tourism board to measure the rand value the event was generating for the local economy. This could be interpreted as a means of control to measure the success of the campaign in the pre-event, during the event and post-event. As mentioned above, while beneficial for long-term planning, these impact studies can be costly and time-consuming.

In conclusion, besides fans, sport marketers must contend with sponsors, local governments, players and the media. Creating messages that appeal to all these stakeholders requires a delicate balance. Differing perspectives on competition exist between those involved in sport events and those responsible for team sport, which complicates the marketing strategy. Although marketers of annual events might not perceive competition as a direct threat, this is not the case with team sport, which is inherently competitive. The difficulty lies in adapting the marketing strategy to various competitive landscapes.

Even though these organisations have large sponsors and budgets, their resources are not limitless. Marketers must decide where to allocate their resources, particularly regarding digital advertising and outsourcing duties. As noted by numerous respondents, maintaining a comprehensive content strategy is resource intensive. To maintain audience engagement, there is a constant need for innovative, engaging and channel-specific content.

Although the respondents relied on a variety of metrics to evaluate campaign performance, it was difficult to correlate these metrics with tangible outcomes such as ticket sales, sponsorship agreements and audience engagement. Given the significance of digital marketing channels, keeping up with the latest changes to social media algorithms, SEO guidelines and ad channels is crucial but can be overwhelming.

Several respondents indicated a willingness to take risks and stretch the limit of what was possible. However, not all organisations are receptive to a trial-and-error strategy, particularly when significant budgets and brand reputation are at stake. While outsourcing provides a solution to the issue of limited internal resources, managing multiple service providers adds an additional layer of complexity to the execution of a campaign. Using CRM systems to automate processes and capture data presents the challenge of adhering to data protection regulations such as the Prevention of Personal Information Act.

Maintaining momentum on multiple social media channels and digital channels necessitates a consistent and yet customised strategy, which is difficult to implement without overspending resources. Sport organisations should consider reallocating resources or invest in additional personnel to manage multiple channels. To assist in maintaining a consistent presence across channels, some tasks could be automated.

Given the rapid rate of change in sport and digital marketing, strategies and tactics must be adaptable to new circumstances, such as a change in sport seasons, player transfers or emerging digital trends. Despite these obstacles, it can be stated that sport marketers use a variety of strategies and instruments to achieve their goals. The key to overcoming these impediments is

continuous performance evaluation, stakeholder engagement and a willingness to innovate and adapt.

5.2.3 Digital marketing functionalities

Sport organisations should utilise various digital functionalities in managing their digital marketing strategy. Utilising these functionalities strategically will assist them to create an online identity, build trust and drive interaction and engagement to achieve the maximum ROI. Each functionality has a specific purpose and, in most cases, it is a means to an end (see section 3.4.2).

The most important functionalities are the organisation's website, email (direct marketing), SEO, display and online advertising, blogs and social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

5.2.3.1 Website

A website can be described as the go-to place for anyone who needs information about a particular subject and is the online face of sport organisations. It is a collection of related content and contains text, images, video and other media (see section 3.4.2.1).

All the interviewees believed that their sport organisations' websites were used primarily as a source of information. They contained details about race dates, venues, course information, athlete-specific information, what stakeholders could expect, tourism information and travel details: *"It is basically an information hub and provides everything a participant would need to know about the event."* Or, as another team sport respondent remarked, their website was used *"more as a shop front. When people search for something related to our team, the website is the first point of contact"*. It was mentioned, however, that keeping their website constantly updated with relevant content was challenging and time-consuming.

Specifically, with regards to team sport, two of the respondents mentioned that their websites had a ticketing system on which fans could choose their seats, the number of tickets they wanted and a parking spot, if required. One of these two respondents mentioned that they were looking to build in features on their websites, such as Uber vouchers and drink discounts: *"The idea is to encourage fans to come to the stadium and spend more time there."* For this reason, they had created an app which made it easier to access information. Contrary to a ticketing system for team sport, the respondents involved in sport events mentioned that the importance of their websites lay in the fact that it was the only place where stakeholders could enter for the event because they were completely paperless.

Interestingly, one respondent representing horseracing mentioned that they had more than one website because their sport organisation operated multiple websites to cater for different aspects of their business: *“We have a Gold Circle website, which is more information-based, but we also have betting sites like Tab Gold and Tracking Ball.”*

The respondents used a variety of terminologies when referring to their organisations’ websites. Typical phrases were “communication channel”, “marketing tool”, “content hosting”, “information hub”, “content sharing”, “information source”, “the runner experience”, “social media integration”, “content ownership” and “engagement with customers”. Websites, thus, have various purposes for sport marketers.

The respondents mentioned that they made use of emails for specific event communication to disseminate information and to keep their stakeholders updated about registrations, payment prompts and road closures, as well as to receive feedback from stakeholders about their experiences. One respondent specified that they used email to handle serious issues or queries that arose from social media, *“taking the conversation offline to handle it more appropriately”*. It was also mentioned that although emails were still the preferred channel, it was difficult to ensure that their emails are not considered spam.

Two respondents, one involved in a sport event, and one in a team sport, stipulated that they used a CRM system for their email marketing and to communicate with their stakeholders. The respondent from the sport event mentioned they had an opt-in form that interested stakeholders could fill out, after which they sent them relevant correspondence via email. *“We, then communicate with stakeholders who really showed interest in our event and are serious about participating (sic).”* By contrast, a respondent who handled a team sport mentioned that they used their CRM system to send out emails about upcoming games, player news and other event information: *“We have a database of about 2.4 million people in South Africa and about half a million globally and have found that this strategy helps us to maintain a relationship with our fans and keep them engaged with the team.”* They also used emails to promote their sponsor’s products and services. The specific sport event organisation, therefore, had a more targeted approach to communicating with stakeholders, whereas the specific team sport organisation communicated with a broader audience on a variety of topics. However, again, their emails could be viewed as spam by the recipients.

It seems that email marketing was used to a lesser extent by team sport organisations for marketing purposes. Three respondents from team sport entities did not explicitly mention email as a digital marketing tool; however, they did talk about content distribution and targeting specific audiences with relevant content, which could potentially involve email marketing. This might also

be because team sport is played on a weekly basis and the pace and momentum of providing content through email marketing was just too fast.

SEO is the use of keywords and algorithms as a tool for the positioning and visibility of the sport organisation's website in search engines such as Google and Bing. During the interviews, no specific references were made by the respondents, except for one, to SEO influencing the positioning and visibility of their websites. However, two respondents did refer to their rankings on the website and the use of keywords in their content to increase higher rankings and findability. It can, thus, be assumed that they either did not view it as important and trusted that the search engines would pick up the relevant keywords or that they were not aware that it was being used. The argument can also be made that the interviewees' sport organisations were well known and part of the sport culture in South Africa. SEO marketing is, thus, not such an important tool in their digital marketing strategy. However, it might pose a problem for sport events for which the organisers want to attract international athletes who will be searching for information about a sporting event held in South Africa.

A final tool that is linked to the sport organisation's website is display and online advertising, which is the advertising of products and services on their websites, apps and social media. Except for one respondent, no specific mention was made by the interviewees about display and online advertising. However, mention was made by two of those involved in sport events, for which they run specific campaigns on social media and track analytics on their websites to determine the effectiveness of the campaign. This might suggest that they use online advertising to some extent.

5.2.3.2 Social media marketing

Social media, as a functionality of digital marketing, is the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and TikTok and is an effective means to interact and engage with stakeholders in their end-to-end journey to create an experience. Sharing content and driving traffic to the organisation's website contributes to relationship building (see section 3.4.2.2). Although all the interviewees indicated that they used most of the social media channels, for the purposes of this study, the analysis of the semi-structured interviews was focused only on Facebook and Instagram as the main channels used during the time of the study (see section (4.7.2.1).

5.2.3.2.1 Facebook

As expected, all the respondents viewed Facebook as the main social media channel for digital marketing: *"We use our Facebook page to share information, make announcements and post content that would interest our stakeholders."* One team sport respondent mentioned that the

content shared on Facebook was informative, with a preview review style, and updates on what was happening in the team's training.

They were also keenly aware of what type of content their Facebook audiences preferred: *"We don't share certain types of content on Facebook, like a TikTok Dance challenge, because the audience on Facebook is less interested in that type of content."* Another respondent remarked that they used Facebook to promote their creative content, such as videos, graphics and action photographs.

Two of the event and team sport respondents indicated that, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, they relied a lot on Facebook as a digital marketing tool for interaction and engagement. One respondent mentioned that their engagement increased during the pandemic: *"It is phenomenal how COVID worked for us or, rather, how reassessing ourselves during a bad pandemic gave us the kick up to do better."*

5.2.3.2.2 Instagram

The respondents also viewed Instagram is an important digital marketing tool because Instagram Reels and Instagram Stories were entertaining and were becoming popular with the younger sport consumers, unlike the older generation. They found that Instagram favoured shortform videos because it performed well. Because Instagram is integrated with Facebook, content, especially videos and photographs, are also shared directly to Facebook. The same content is also made available on their YouTube channels. Two sport event participants indicated that they also streamed events for those who could not attend them or did not have the means to watch it on television.

One team sport participant indicated that they also integrated the content on their Instagram account with their TikTok account, with the specific aim of appealing to their younger audience: *"The digital space for us is just massive, so we can speak to this new audience."*

Facebook and Instagram were used as a digital marketing tool to provide content and keep the excitement and engagement in the sport alive by posting scenes on how the athletes and teams were training, interviewing and profiling participants and players, and posting shortform videos of highlights of events and games and behind-the-scenes content.

To summarise the section on the functionalities of digital marketing, it is evident that sport marketers encounter many obstacles on numerous digital channels. Websites that serve multiple purposes, such as ticket sales, event information and sponsor promotions, require constant updates and personalised user experiences. Email marketing introduces targeting and database

management challenges, particularly for sport with frequent events, necessitating strong CRM systems. Despite widespread recognition of SEO, there is a lack of strategic SEO planning, which could impede discoverability, especially for international audiences.

Social media channels present their own challenges, such as determining what content resonates on each channel and how to maintain high levels of engagement during off-peak hours. The difficulty also lies in catering to various demographics and keeping up with frequent events, particularly in team sport. Online and display advertising raises concerns regarding effectiveness and ROI, whereas consistency is essential across all digital marketing efforts. The challenge for marketers is to manage a complex stakeholder voyage across all these channels, juggling content creation, frequency of posting and diverse audience engagement strategies.

5.3 INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS FROM THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

The aim of this chapter was to answer the third research question, namely:

What digital marketing strategies are used by sport organisations in South Africa?

The analysis obtained from the semi-structured interviews showed that sport organisations encountered several challenges when it comes to effectively managing two-way communication with their stakeholders. The pursuit of active participation through co-creation processes, such as surveys, is frequently hindered by the challenges of cost and difficulty. These obstacles arise due to various factors, including stakeholder apathy or time constraints. Despite the utilisation of various communication channels, such as social media and email, organisations encounter challenges in effectively managing and monitoring these channels. Furthermore, the recurring pattern of sport involvement, which reaches its highest point during match days, presents challenges in maintaining regular engagement with stakeholders and effectively allocating resources.

The varying frequencies of sporting events, whether they occur on an annual or weekly basis, require the implementation of customised strategies to effectively engage with the audience. The challenge of maintaining year-long engagement is often encountered in the context of annual events, whereas the concern of stakeholder fatigue tends to arise in the case of more frequent events. Gaining insights from stakeholder feedback poses a significant challenge for organisations. While there is a widespread belief that the stakeholders are provided with an end-to-end experience, the specific components of this experience lack standardised processes. This poses a challenge in ensuring a consistent stakeholder experience throughout the entire event lifecycle, influencing the pre- and post-event stages.

Sport organisations frequently encounter challenges while trying to connect with their stakeholders in the realm of content creation, particularly in situations where there are limitations such as restricted stadium capacities. The COVID-19 pandemic forced them to adapt and make quick decisions because they were compelled to swiftly transition to virtual channels. In addition to catering to stakeholders, sport marketers must also navigate the complexities of engaging with various stakeholders, including sponsors, local governments and players. Each of these groups requires its own unique messaging and strategies, thereby contributing to the complex nature of the marketing landscape.

Organisations face limitations in terms of resources, despite their significant availability. Decisions must be made with respect to the allocation of resources to digital advertising and which operations should be outsourced. Reallocation of resources is needed due to the necessity of creating inventive, captivating and tailored content for each channel to sustain audience engagement. The level of complexity is delicate when sport organisations also engage multiple service providers and must comply with data protection regulations while implementing automated processes via CRM systems.

Ultimately, the diverse digital channels employed in sport marketing present distinct challenges. Websites require regular updates to accommodate various functionalities, such as ticket sales and sponsor promotions. The use of email marketing poses challenges in terms of database management, particularly in the context of sport that host frequent events. The planning of SEO is often lacking, which carries the risk that content will not be discovered, especially by global audiences. The dynamic nature of sport and digital marketing necessitates continual innovation, adaptability and comprehensive strategies, often posing challenges in their implementation due to limited resources.

It is, therefore, suggested that the digital marketing framework for sport should address two-way communication to manage interactive communication by using analytics to be more *data driven*. The framework should also consist of methods to enhance active participation through co-creation and put the stakeholder at the centre of the marketing strategy to provide for a *stakeholder-centric experience*. Furthermore, it should include *audience segmentation* based on the frequency of the sport event in terms of year-long engagement for annual events and stakeholder fatigue for frequent events. It should also incorporate a holistic approach to channel management, *integrate digital channels* for a comprehensive user experience and provide for ways to efficiently allocate resources. Lastly, the digital framework should be focused on *strategic content creation*; for instance, moving to a virtual environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic or in circumstances

such as limited stadium capacity. These elements will result in a focused approach and at the same time address the unique challenges of sport marketing.

The findings are in direct accordance with the research objective of creating a digital marketing framework specifically customised to address the distinct requirements of sport marketers in South Africa. The framework aims to improve interactive communication by emphasising the importance of two-way communication and the use of analytics to drive data-driven strategies, resulting in more responsive and effective communication. By emphasising active participation through co-creation and prioritising a stakeholder-centric approach, the marketing strategies are carefully tailored to meet the specific needs and preferences of the audience. This ultimately leads to increased engagement and loyalty. Implementing audience segmentation based on event frequency addresses the issues of stakeholder exhaustion and ensures sustained involvement throughout the year, which is essential for sport with fluctuating event calendars. The comprehensive incorporation of digital channels aims to establish smooth user interactions, while strategic content development tailored to present circumstances, such as the transition to virtual settings prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, guarantees the framework's flexibility and ability to adjust to external fluctuations. Collectively, these components contribute to a strong structure that acknowledges the unique characteristics of the sport marketing landscape in South Africa, guaranteeing that digital marketing tactics are both efficient and suitable for the specific context.

These findings deviate from conventional digital marketing strategies for products and services, as they specifically cater to the ever-changing and emotionally intense realm of sport marketing. This field requires active involvement of stakeholders and customised experiences that deeply connect with individuals on a personal level. Sport marketing differs from traditional product marketing in that it necessitates a more intricate strategy that integrates timely communication, event-specific content, and profound emotional connections. These elements are crucial for fostering enduring relationships with sport stakeholders, as opposed to targeting broad consumer segments and standard transactional interactions.

In Chapter 6, the feedback of the respondents is evaluated against a content analysis of their websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts.

CHAPTER 6 CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data from the semi-structured interviews are assessed in relation to a qualitative content analysis of the sporting organisations' websites and Facebook and Instagram accounts, as well as the constructs identified in the literature (see table 4.2), with a view to answering specific research question 4:

How do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of websites, Facebook and Instagram in their digital marketing to build relationships with sport stakeholders?

The findings will indicate how these functionalities were used in the sporting organisations' digital marketing strategies to build relationships with stakeholders.

6.1.1 Online presence of sport organisations

Table 6.1 below is a list of the sport organisations' digital marketing channels that were analysed, namely their websites and Facebook and Instagram accounts. The table shows the sport organisations' website URLs. The Facebook names are the sport organisations' usernames, which are usually the entities' real names to make them personal. The Instagram handles refer to the public usernames the sport organisations use, which are their unique identities on Instagram.

Table 6-1: Sport organisations' digital marketing channels that were analysed

Sport organisations	Websites	Social media	
		Facebook Name	Instagram Handle
Comrades Marathon	https://www.comrades.com	ComradesMarathon	comradesmarathon
Dusi Canoe Marathon	https://dusi.co.za	Dusi Canoe Marathon	dusicanoe marathon
Iron Man SA	https://www.ironman.com/im703-south-africa	Ironman	ironmantri
Two Oceans Marathon	https://www.twooceansmarathon.org.za	Two Oceans Marathon	totalsporttwooceansmarathon
Blue Bulls Rugby franchise	https://bullsrugby.co.za	Vodacom Bulls	blue_bulls_official
Titans Cricket franchise	https://www.titans.co.za	Titans Cricket Team	titanscricket
Mind Sport SA	https://mindsporta.co.za/#	Mind Sport South Africa - MMSA	mindsportouthafrica
Gold Circle horseracing and betting	https://www.goldcircle.co.za	Gold Circle	theofficialgoldcycleracing

As indicated in sections 3.3.2.3.1 and 4.6.2.3, the content of the participating sport organisations' websites and Facebook and Instagram channels were analysed according to the following units: text, buttons or tabs, photographs, videos and infographics. The data were segmented into the categories of content type, metrics, style, visual elements, frequency, audience interaction and calls to action (see section 2.6.2.3).

In the following section, the digital marketing strategies the sport organisations used in relationship building are described to triangulate the information provided in the semi-structured interviews (see Chapter 5). This is done according to the concept of digital integration and the constructs of user engagement, content creation, community nurturing and traffic generation (see Table 4.2).

6.2 DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES OF SPORT ORGANISATIONS' WEBSITES, FACEBOOK PAGES AND INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS

6.2.1 Digital integration

Digital integration is a combination of the functionalities of a website and social media marketing. It serves as the interactive public face of an organisation, forming the core of a digital marketing strategy (see section 3.4.2). It leverages social media channels, enabling individuals and

organisations to produce, publish and disseminate informative content and emphasise user engagement by engaging users through likes, shares, comments and direct interactions. Furthermore, it fosters communication and relationship building, delivering online marketing offerings through an integrated web and social media interface. In this process, it facilitates the development of a digital community, thereby strengthening the organisation's digital presence (see section 4.6.2.2.1).

6.2.1.1 User engagement

User engagement refers to the interaction with and participation of users on both the website and social media channels. It is stimulated by posting interesting and relevant content, asking questions, conducting polls and responding to comments and messages. On the part of the user, it concerns activities such as commenting, sharing, liking and contributing to brand communication activities across these channels (see section 3.2.1).

User engagement is not easy to accomplish on websites because they are used mainly to provide information about events. On the participating sport organisations' websites, user engagement is attempted by "contact us" and "about us" tabs on their website, which clicks through to an email page, contact numbers and physical addresses (see Figure 6.1). Links to social media channels are also displayed to provide easy access.

Other features are tabs with a dropdown to enable users to click on links with more information. It seems that they attempt to pre-empt questions that the user might have and include content such as the date of the next event or fixture lists of games for the season, entry information and an online entry portal, a ticket sales portal, news articles, results, rules, a photo gallery, an online shop and an offer for a subscription to an e-newsletter. This can be seen as an example of a user interface and user experience as indicated in the literature (see section 3.4.2.1). Additionally, they include content types, such as profiles of team players, the results of previous matches and information about the stadium to enhance user engagement (see section 3.3.2.3.1). Some mention about these features was also made in section 5.2.1.3 in the semi-structured interviews.

Three out of the eight websites also provide training programmes on how to prepare for the upcoming event. Two websites also have a countdown timer to indicate how much time is left for the stakeholders to prepare for the upcoming event. In the semi-structured interviews, the respondents indicated that they monitored what their stakeholders were saying about the sport event and that that information was used to create relevant content for their websites (see section 5.2.1.3).

Figure 6.1 is an example of user engagement on sport organisations' websites.

Name

Last name

Id number / race number

Email

Phone

Contact
Tel: 033 897 8650
Email: info@comrades.com

Address
18 Connaught Rd
Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg
Kwazulu Natal
South Africa
3201

Postal Address
P O Box 100621
Scottsville
3201

HOME RESULTS SHOP COMRADES MONOPOLY COFFEE TABLE BOOK

ENTER NOW ABOUT RACE INFO OUR EVENTS NEWS INTERNATIONAL CHARITIES

THE ULTIMATE HUMAN RACE

HOME THE RACE THE RIVERS ENTRY INFO DUSI APP MEDIA RESULTS

THE BULLS JERSEY QUIZ

0%

Mind Sports South Africa

Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHAT IS THE MSSA?
2. WHY IS THE MSSA RUN BY VOLUNTEERS?
3. CAN ANYONE JOIN?
4. WHY MUST I JOIN THROUGH A CLUB?

OUR FIXTURES & RESULTS

HOME TEAM	VENUE/DATE/TIME/RESULTS
Emirates Lions	Emirates Airline Park 17 September 2022, 16:05 15-31
Vodacom Bulls	Loftus Versfeld 24 September 2022, 15:30 33-31

TABGOLD

BET NOW

CLICK THE LINKS BELOW TO VIEW THE RACE CARDS

[Hollywoodbets Greyville Race Card – 11 Jan 2023](#)

Please Note That Race Times Are Subject To Change

Figure 6-1: User engagement on sport organisations' websites

Regarding social media, the content analysis shows that the participating sport organisations, except for one sport team, have a high number of followers. This could be an indication of trust and credibility. A high following also means a higher reach, which can lead to increased exposure for awareness and engagement in the form of likes, shares and comments by stakeholders (see section 3.3.2.3.1).

Table 6-2: Breakdown of sport organisations' followings

Sport Organisation	Number Facebook followers	Number of Instagram followers
Comrades Marathon	91K	41.8K
Dusi Canoe Marathon	11K	4.7K
Ironman SA	47.6K	20.6K
TotalSport Two Oceans Marathon	73K	21.6K
Vodacom Bulls	273.2K	99.18K
Momentum Multiply Titans	69K	16.2K
Gold Circle Horseracing and Betting	34.5K	3.4K
Mind Sport SA	4.6K	3.1K

Table 6.2 provides a breakdown of the number of followers on sport organisations Facebook pages and Instagram accounts, which can be associated with user engagement. However, it is important to note that a large following is not always indicative of a successful digital marketing strategy. What is more important is how engaged and active the following is. Inactive or disengaged followers do little to promote a brand, and, in the worst-case scenario, a large number of such followers might even be viewed negatively. As a result, the goal should be to cultivate an engaged and targeted audience rather than simply gaining more followers (See section 3.2.1).

Contact information is also freely accessible on the sport organisations' Facebook pages and Instagram accounts. An "intro" section with an "About us" tab on their Facebook pages provides detailed explanations about the sport organisations, with links to their websites, contact information, and maps. Both Facebook and Instagram have messenger tabs for visitors to engage with the sport organisations through direct messages.

As indicated by the respondents in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.1.3), they focused a lot on profiling players or jockeys, interviews with players and shortform videos of highlights of matches and races, with accompanying text on their Facebook pages and Instagram accounts as a form of engagement. This is especially evident on the Vodacom Bulls, Momentum Titans and Gold Circle's social media channels. See figure 6.2 for an examples of sport organisations' user engagement on Facebook and Instagram.

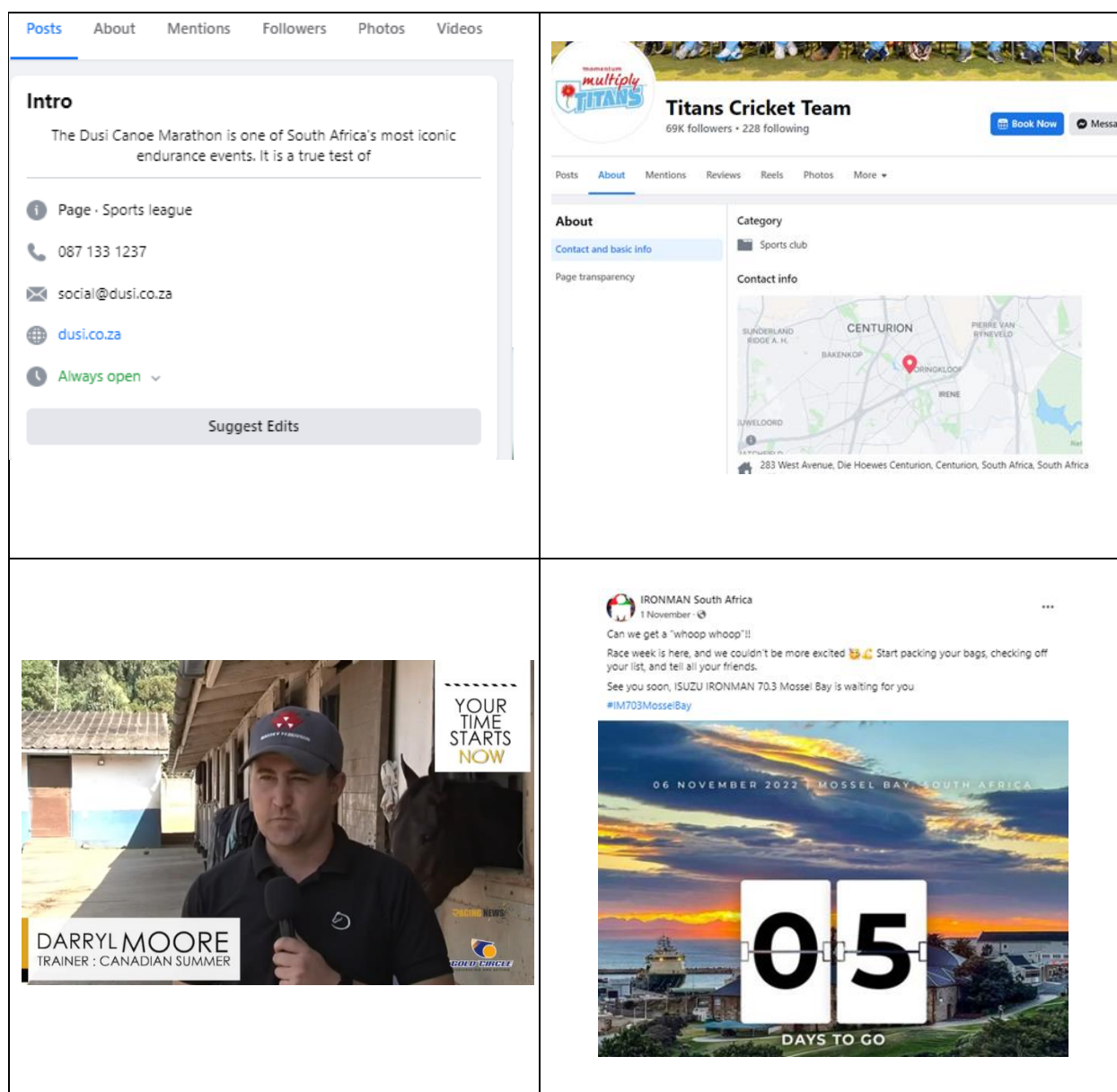


Figure 6-2: Examples of sport organisations' user engagement on Facebook and Instagram

No online discussion forums or chat portals, as a form of user engagement, were found on the participating sport organisations' websites, which was confirmed in the semi-structured interviews (see section 5.2.1.2). However, as indicated in the literature, forums are an important go-to place for stakeholders to verify and find information (see section 3.4.1).

A review tab was available on the sport events' Facebook pages for users to write reviews but not on the team sport' Facebook pages (see figure 6.3). It was found, however, that not many users wrote reviews. The Facebook page of one of the sport events did not receive any review from their stakeholders. It seems, thus, that the stakeholders are hesitant about writing reviews.

This confirmed what was said in the semi-structured interviews – that getting feedback was a challenge for them. Other ways of engagement should, thus, be developed.

Figure 6.3 also shows that three out of the four sport events’ social media channels provide a rating scale of one to five on how stakeholders rate the sport organisations. On average, these sport events receive a rating of four out of five. User engagement is also encouraged by running a poll on Facebook by asking the stakeholders direct questions, such as whether they would recommend the sport event, with an option to answer “Yes” or “No”. This can be seen as an example of interaction and engagement in building relationships, as indicated in the literature (see section 3.2.1). Some interaction and engagement are present in the form of comments and likes; however, they are mostly about the match and congratulating teams on their wins.

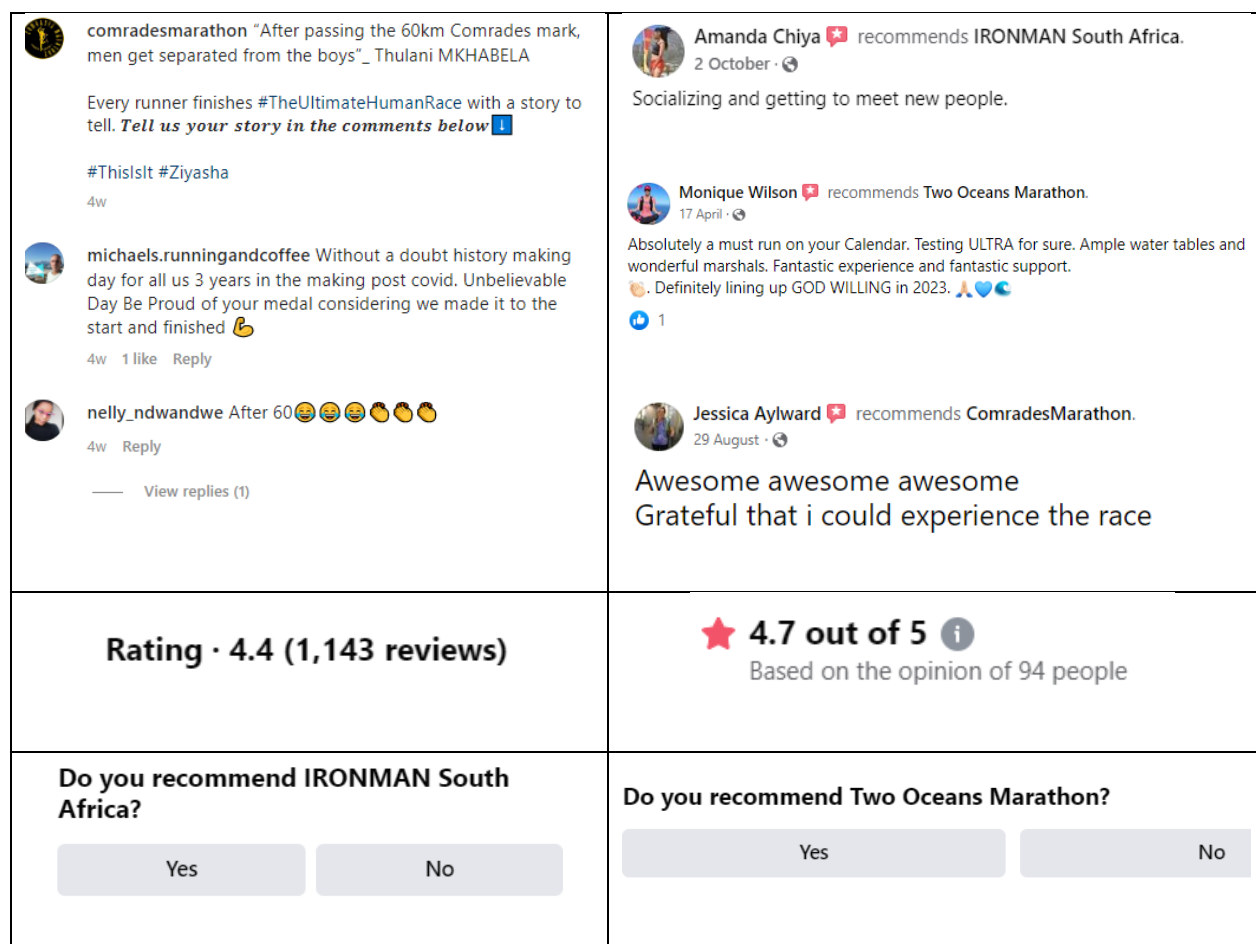


Figure 6-3: Example of creating user engagement through reviews and polls

6.2.1.2 Content creation

Content creation involves the production and publication of informative, entertaining and inspiring content across website and social media channels. It serves a different but complementary role in digital marketing (see section 3.3.2.3).

The websites of the participating sport organisations are populated with content that provides information to visitors to encourage participation. The content is in the form of prominent images, graphics, videos and infographics. As mentioned by the respondents in the interviews, they use these types of content to create a customer end-to-end experience (see section 5.2.1.3). This is also in accordance with the literature, as indicated in section 3.3.2.3. This content is supplemented with photographs and graphics about the opening of entries and countdowns to the closing of entries, as well as on training, interviews and the number of entries reached, which are examples of informative content. Figure 6.4 shows how sport organisations use informative content.

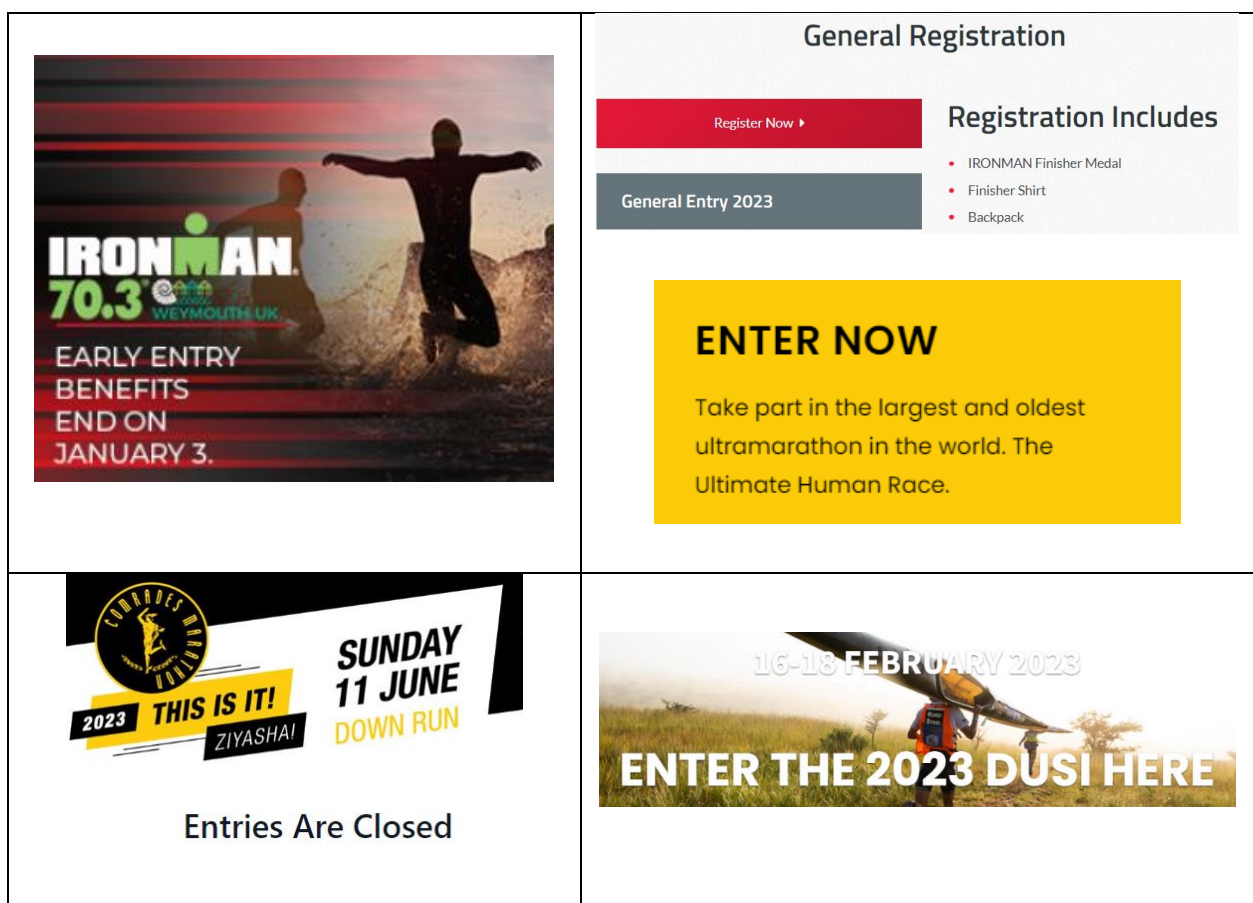
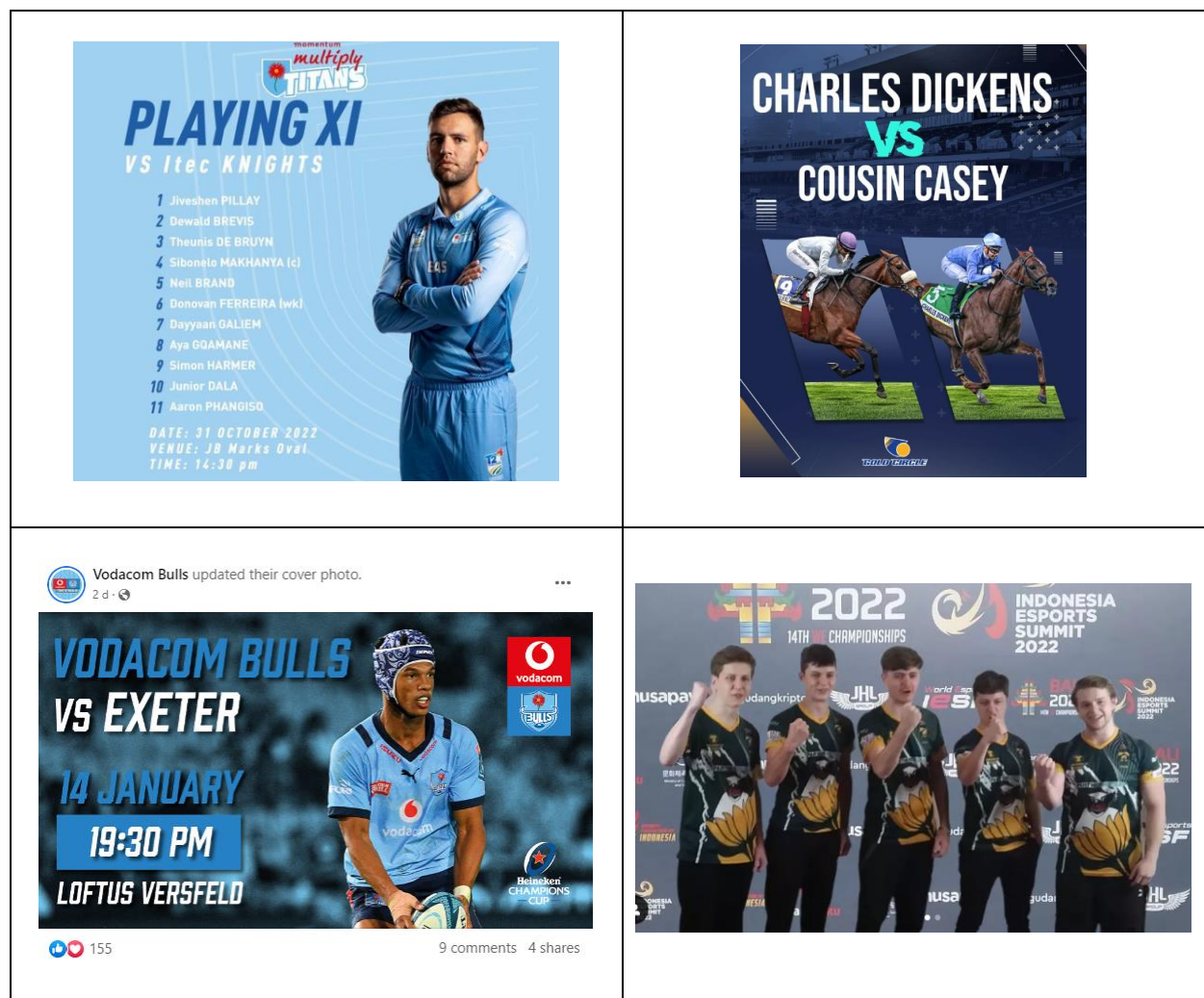


Figure 6-4: Example of informative content

Other forms of content on the sport organisations' websites are to provide entertainment, which could also be seen as informative. This is done by posting information about the fixtures and results and showing highlights. The fixture list indicates the home and away games, and where the team is placed on the log with the number of points. Furthermore, a tickets tab or, as in the case of Gold Circle, a betting tab, lets the user buy tickets or place bets online, as can be seen in Figure 6.5. Although real-time updates are more applicable for social media channels, the sport organisations' websites could also feature a live blog or update feed to be used for entertaining content.



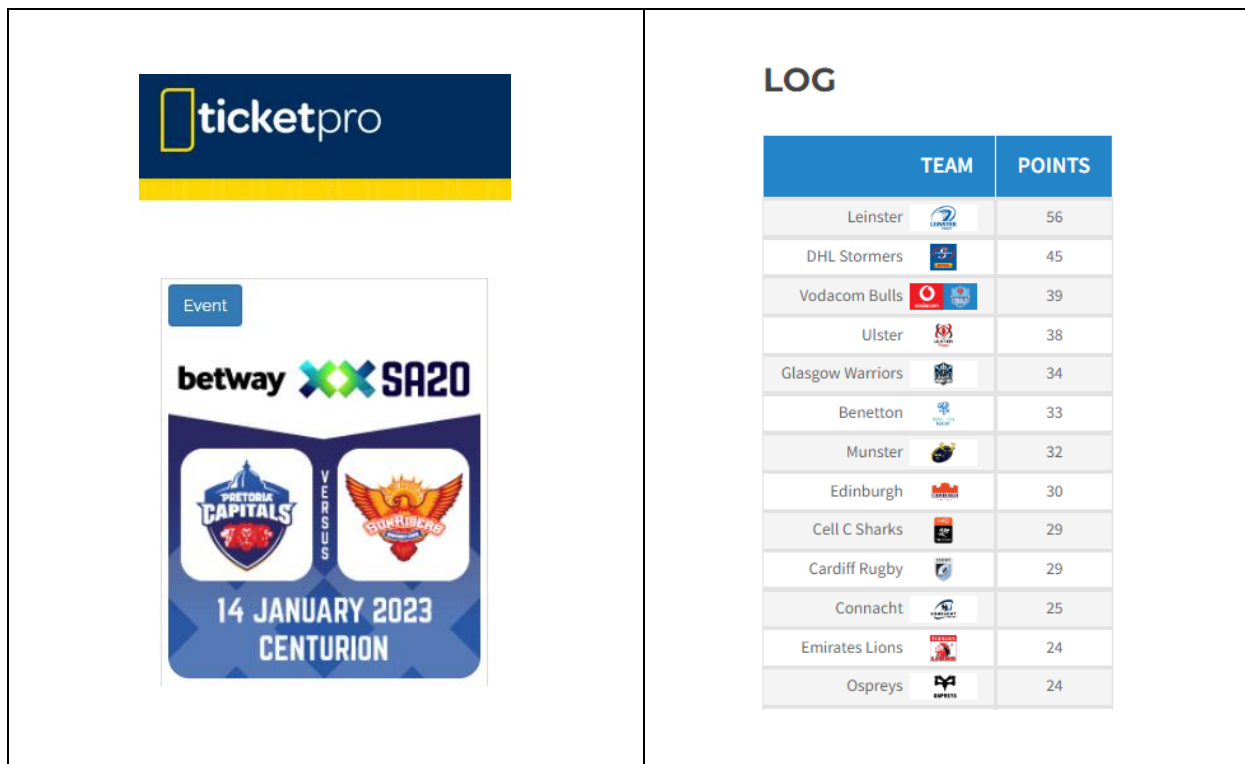


Figure 6-5: Example of entertaining content on sport organisation's website

The Facebook pages and Instagram accounts of the participating sport organisations are populated with a great deal of information in the form of shortform videos, action photographs, interviews and profiles of players to provide entertainment for the followers. Especially on sport teams' Facebook pages and Instagram accounts in the week prior to the game, the focus of the content is on the upcoming match, with the team line-ups, dates and times of the games, flashbacks to the performances of key players and statistics about previous performances. Other examples of entertaining content found was videos of the route and interviews with top runners and athletes. It was mentioned by one of the team sport interviewees that they tried and keep the momentum going (see section 5.2.2.3). One team sport organisation also updates its cover photo with an advertisement about the upcoming event.

The analysis showed that all this content was an integrated effort on the sport organisations' websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts and was, as indicated, in the literature, done to create an end-to-end experience for the participants and their families (see section 3.3.2.2).



Titans Cricket Team

1 November 2022 · 🌐

We're off to the #CSAT20Challenge semi-finals 🏏.

#SkyBlues | ❤️ | #WhereLegendsRise



Mind Sports South Africa - MSSA

29 October 2022 · 🌐

South Africa demolishes Namibia in Dota 2



WIN BIG

PICK 6

MEGAPOOL KENILWORTH SAT 07 JAN

Carryover R1,000,000 - Leg 1 Race 4 @ 13:50

LIKELY POOL

R 6,000,000

BET WITH **tab GOLD** THE INTELLIGENT BETTER

www.tabgold.co.za



Vodacom Bulls

2 d · 🌐

An absolute belter of a try to draw first blood 🔥 Originating from within

Richelieu Brandy

#TrueToTheBlue

V... See more



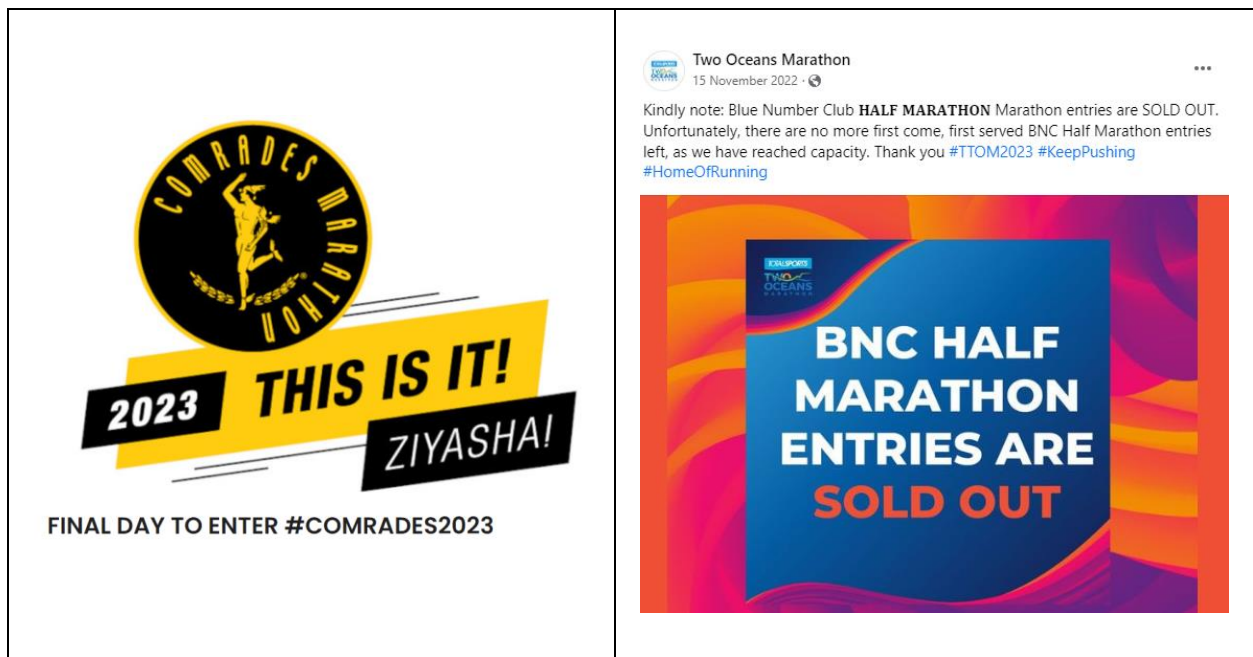


Figure 6-6: Examples of entertaining content on Facebook and Instagram

Finally, UGC is also employed by the sport organisations, whereby stakeholders are encouraged to post comments about their experiences on their social media channels by using specific hashtags. The sport organisations were found to repost and share this UGC on their own social media channels to showcase the passion and support of their stakeholders, which could be seen as a form of inspiring content. However, it could also be viewed as entertaining content.

Hashtags are also used to inspire stakeholders, as can be seen with the Comrades Marathon, which has an overall tagline, namely “#TheUltimateHumanRace”. Every year the Comrades Marathon and TotalSport Two Oceans Marathon introduce a theme that is also used as a hashtag. This was also indicated during the semi-structured interviews. For the 2023 events, the Comrades Marathon used #Thisisit and TotalSport Two Oceans used #Conquerthecurrent. Other hashtags used were #TrueToTheBlue, #WhereLegendsRise, and #esportza, to name a few.

While hashtags can increase the visibility of a post and attract a larger audience, they also have some potential drawbacks. One of the most significant of these is the possibility of “hashtag hijacking”, in which individuals or groups use a hashtag for an entirely different purpose than intended, typically to criticise or mock the original message or organisation. This can dilute the intended message and even lead to reputational damage.

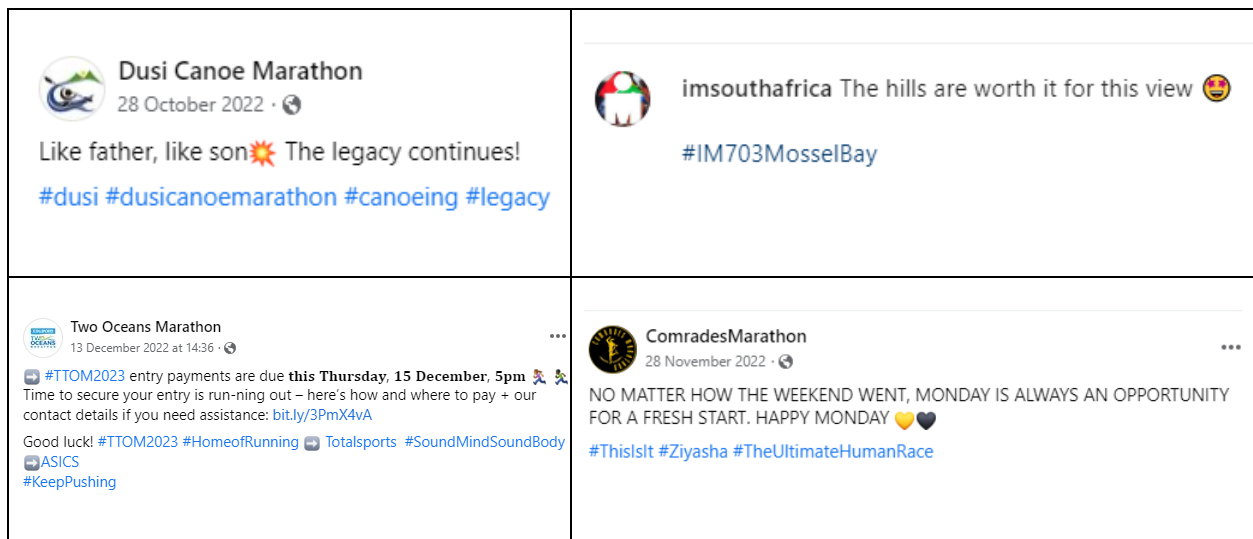


Figure 6-7: Examples of inspiring content on Facebook and Instagram

6.2.1.3 Community nurturing

Nurturing communities refers to sharing content that resonates with stakeholders on both the website and social media channels, which cultivates a sense of belonging and loyalty (see paragraph 3.3.7). This can be to encourage fans to share their experiences, photographs or videos (UGC), quizzes and polls (interactive content), how-to videos, articles about history, or tips to improve performance (educational content) and special deals or early access to tickets (exclusive offers) (see section 3.3).

Sport organisations attempt to establish community nurturing on their Facebook pages and Instagram accounts by posting entry information well before the event takes place to offer the stakeholders a form of commitment and enough time to properly prepare for the event. One of the sport event organisers offered free entries to a few lucky entrants with a hamper to encourage entering for the event. A similar approach was giving out a free entry to a lucky entrant who paid before a certain date. The winners were announced through posts on Facebook and Instagram to foster a sense of community (see figure 6.8). The offering of free entries can be seen as a strategic move that can increase engagement, generate a hype about the event, collect data and boost revenue in other ways, which could contribute to the event's overall success.



CONGRATULATIONS!

DANIEL SMITH

FROM
GERMISTON CALLIES HARRIERS

**#Comrades2023
FREE Entry Winner**

2023 THIS IS IT! ZIYASHA!

comradesmarathon CONGRATULATIONS Daniel Smith who is running for Germiston Callies Harriers for winning the #Comrades2023 ENTRY HAMPER.

You can also stand a chance to win a #Comrades2023 entry by entering now. We also have lucky hampers up for grabs!

#ThisIsIt. Secure your entry for 2023 Comrades Marathon now at www.comrades.com

T's & C's Apply
#Ziyasha #Comrades2023
3w

zenfit61 Yay!! Thank you so much! 🙏🙏 #stoked
3w Reply

sinothie ake ngingenele 🙏🙏🙏🙏
3w Reply See translation

Liked by 4amgrindirise and others
DECEMBER 6



**TOTALSPORTS
TWO OCEANS
MARATHON**

CONGRATULATIONS!

totalsportstwoceansmarathon Congratulations to the following #TTOM2023 runners who became winners in our Win a Getaway #TTOM2023 competition, simply by paying for their entry by 15 December 2022:

Sithembile DlaDla – Arabella Hotel, Golf and Spa getaway
Courtesy of our Official Hospitality Partner, @southernsunhotels
Rebecca Mateo – Kleinmond Lodge getaway and
Jaco Nel – Black Oystercatcher getaway

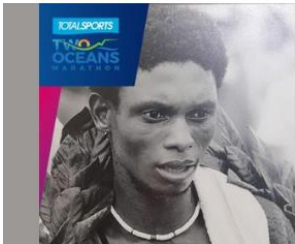
#TTOM2023 #KeepPushing
4d

b.konke_runs 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏
1d Reply

vuyokaziludidi I'm so jealous 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏
2d Reply

Two Oceans Marathon
17 October · 🌐

These TOM legends take pride of place in our museum and should well serve as inspo for your 2023 Totalsports Two Oceans Marathon preparations. Who are these #TOM heroes? #TTOM2023

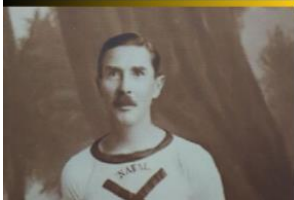



ComradesMarathon
27 October · 🌐

#TBT to the begining of The Ultimate Human Race!

The 1920's produced the first of the Comrades greats. A 39 year old pipe smoking farmer from Harding , named Arthur Newton who won the race four times from 1922 to 1925 and again in 1927. He also set the first astonishing Sub 7 hour run, changing the face of long distance running.

In 1923, Arthur's refusal of the first place prize (*as he felt he had an unfair advantage over his rivals due to his spare time for training as a ...* See more



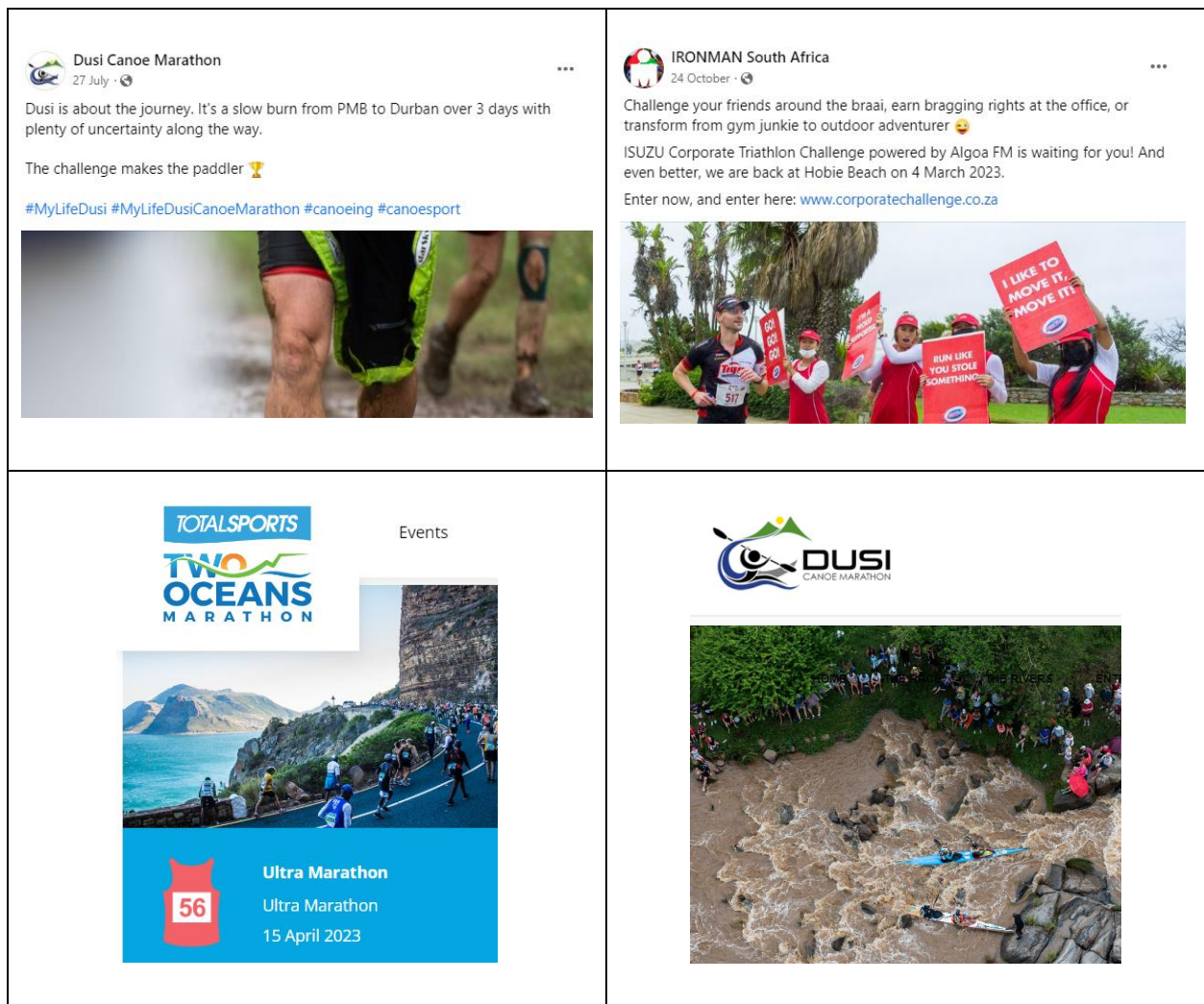



Figure 6-8: Example of community nurturing on Facebook and Instagram

Community nurturing is also encouraged through flashbacks of past winners or interesting facts about the history of the event. This can be interpreted as a means of creating interest in and awareness off the event and trying to draw some form of reaction from users in the form of likes and comments, as seen in Figure 6.9. Other means of nurturing communities is by posting scenic photographs with vibrant captions and text about past events for a sense of emotional appeal and a desire to want to be part of the action.

Two of the sport events have, to a large extent, turned their events into raising funds for charity and getting athletes to run for charity to demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility. Similarly, three of the team sport organisations support a cancer foundation, a trust fund and a bursary fund. Stakeholders are encouraged to make donations to the cancer foundation. The aim of the trust is to develop, nurture and prepare underprivileged young cricketers. In the same way, the bursary fund aims to provide learning opportunities for South African youth to get a formal qualification. Such initiatives are also noted in the literature as a way to nurture communities and

build relationships with stakeholders. Aligning their fundraising goals with the needs and desires of the community is an important factor that sport organisations should take note of. Figure 6.10 is an example of how the participating organisers of sport events use fundraising as a form of community nurturing.

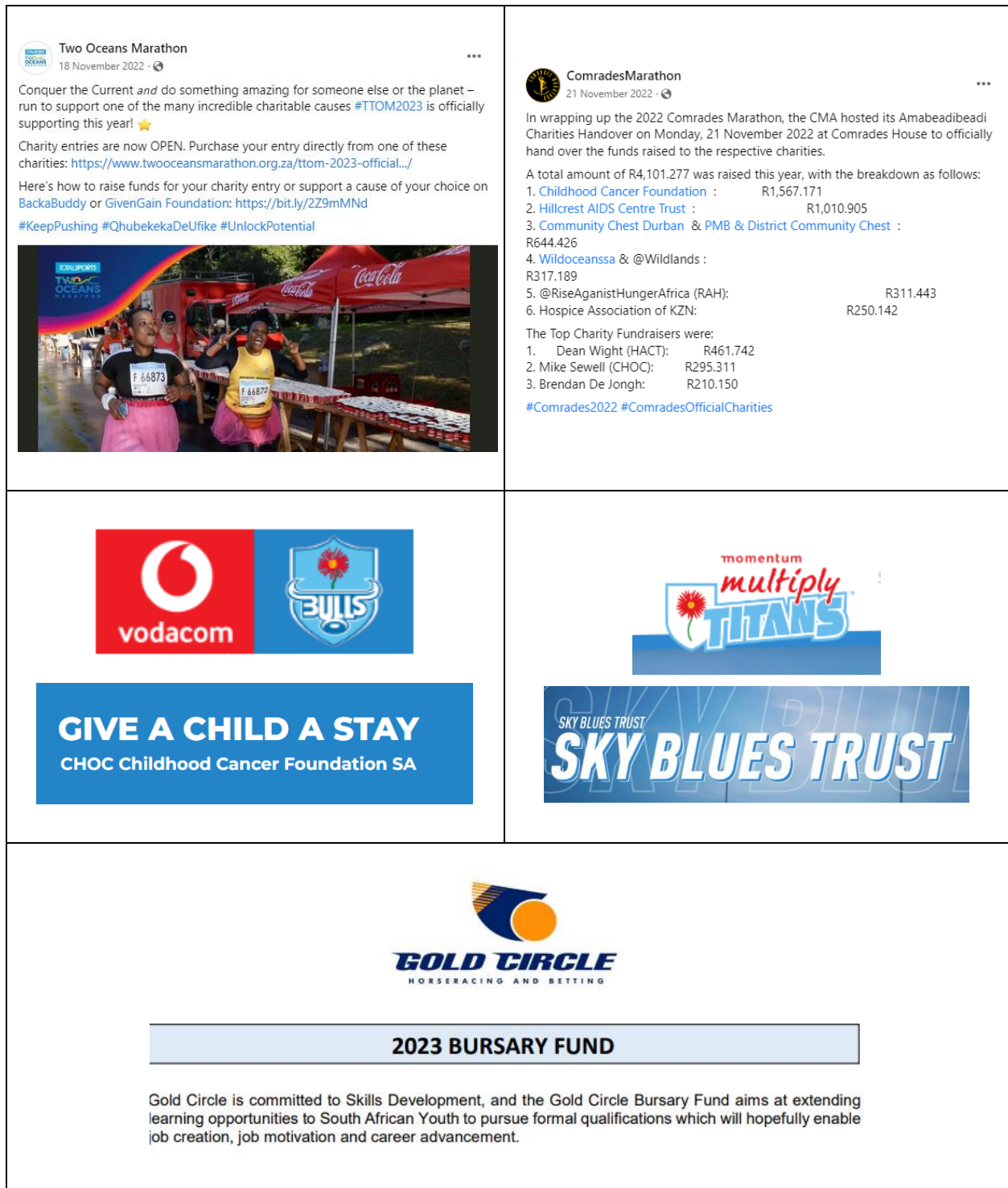
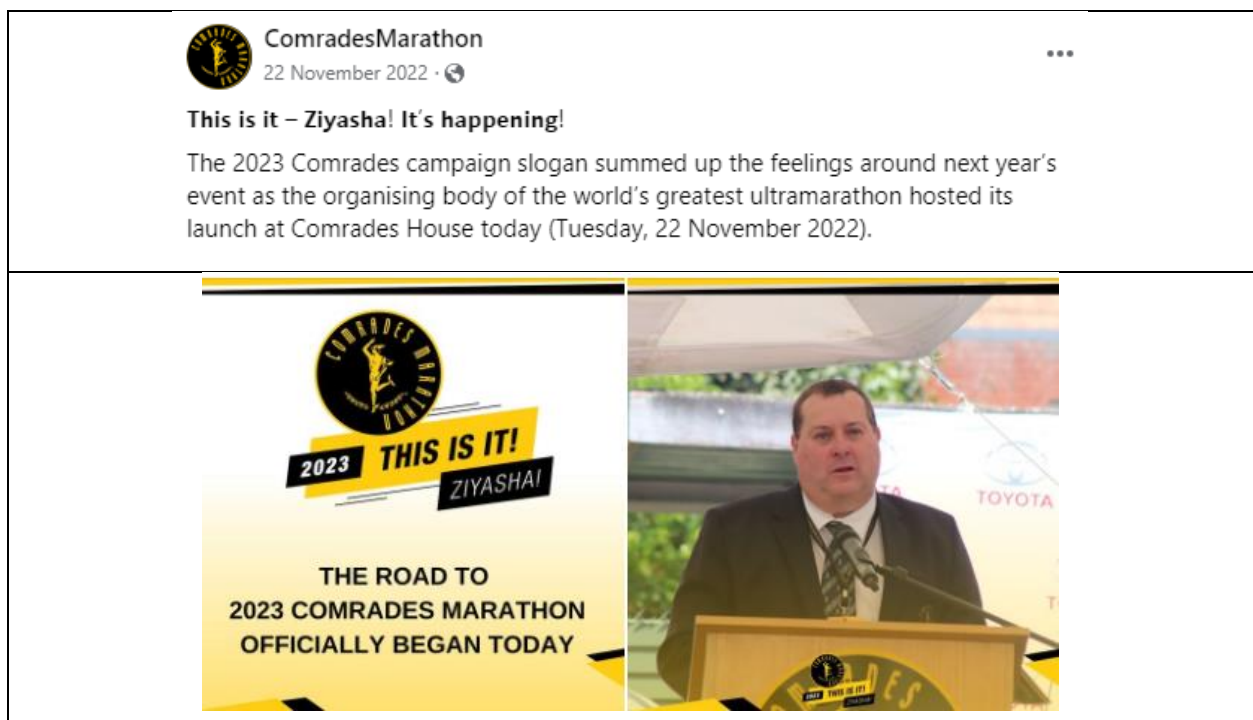


Figure 6-9: Examples of fundraising as part of community nurturing

It was also found that some content, such as event announcements, player profiles and highlights, performed better than others, which can be derived from the number of likes on certain content, comments received and how many times they were being shared. Important factors to consider are the timing of content, relevance, emotional appeal and potential for engagement. The interviewees stipulated that they monitored how content performed and that they used content management channels such as Hootsuite and BrandsEye to measure KPIs such as reach, impressions, sentiment and engagement (see section 5.2.2.2). This is also indicated in the literature on the control of the digital marketing strategy (see section 3.4.1.2). Figure 6.11 is an example of content about the launch of the 2023 Comrades Marathon, which is informative and performs well. The post received 251 likes, 58 comments and 49 shares. The post from the Blue Bulls on Instagram about the man of the match, which is entertaining, received 2.3K likes, 69 comments and 70K views. This could be because the content was aligned with the pressing issue of opening of entries for an event, entertainment or emotional connection with the audience. It seemed that the content category (e.g., promotional, announcements and player profiles) generally performed better than the format of the content in the form of photographs, video and text, which suggests that the users were looking for specific types of information or experiences and could indicate a desire for insider knowledge, updates or a personal connection to the athlete or team, rather than just visually appealing content, which, in turn, gives an indication of what type of content should be given priority. This knowledge could guide strategic decision-making in content creation and improve the effectiveness of digital marketing efforts.



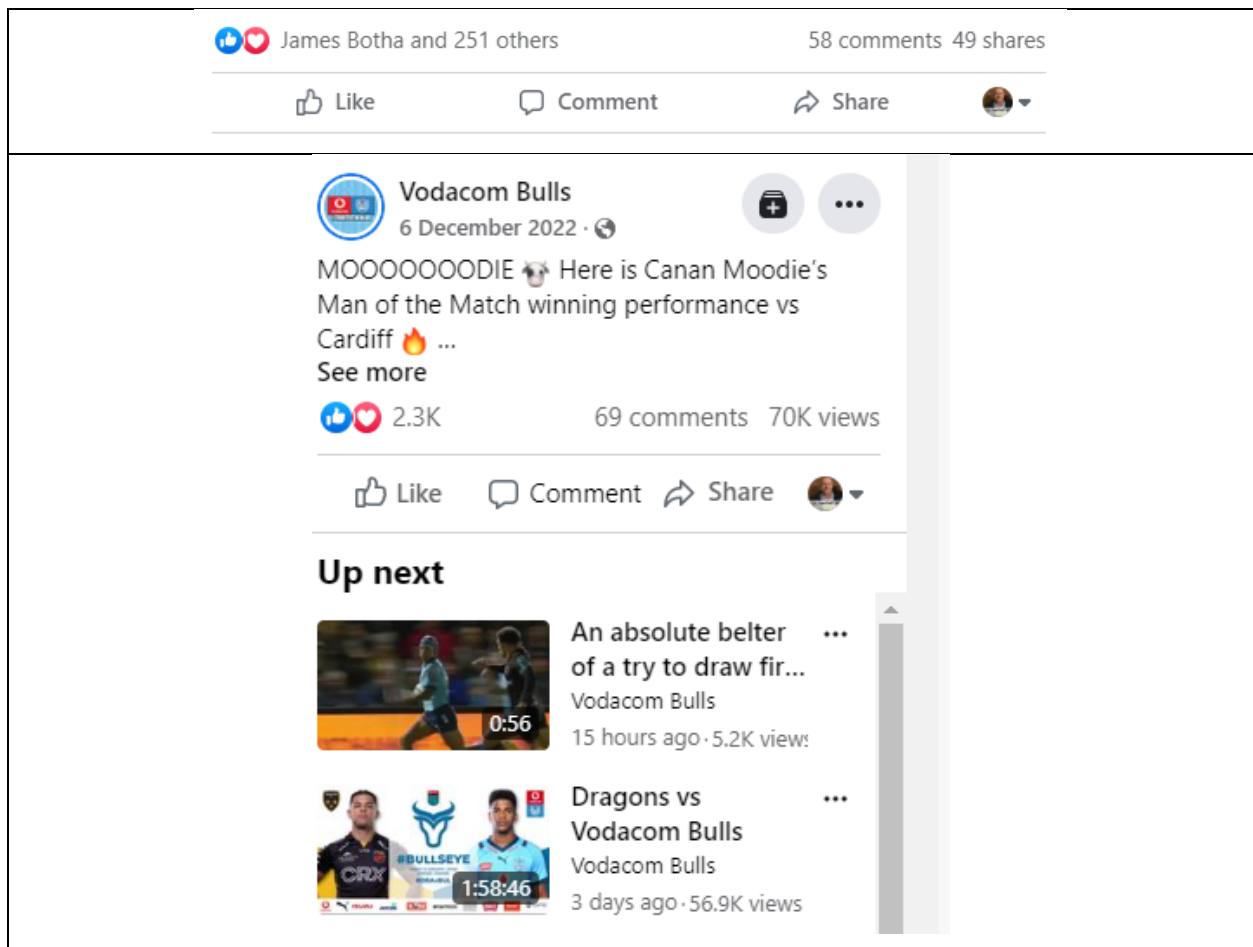


Figure 6-10: Example of content that performs well as part of community nurturing

6.2.1.4 Traffic generation

Traffic generation is defined as the efforts aimed towards driving user traffic to both the website and social media channels by, for instance, sharing weblinks. It involves sharing information to drive traffic to websites (see section 3.4.2.1).

Instagram and, to a lesser degree, Facebook, are more focused on the visual aspects such as photographs and videos. It was found that sport organisations used these social media channels to drive traffic and get more visitors to their website by linking the content to their websites. These links exposed them to more content of value, such as race information, results and fixture lists. The purpose is to convert social engagement into tangible outcomes, such as entering for an event or selling tickets for a game and signing up for a newsletter.

Additionally, links to external pages were evident. This included registration forms, ticket sales, e-commerce sites blogs, subscriptions to e-newsletters, upcoming events and matches, calls to

action to buy tickets, entering for the event, getting more information, promoting discounts, entering for competitions and support for charities.

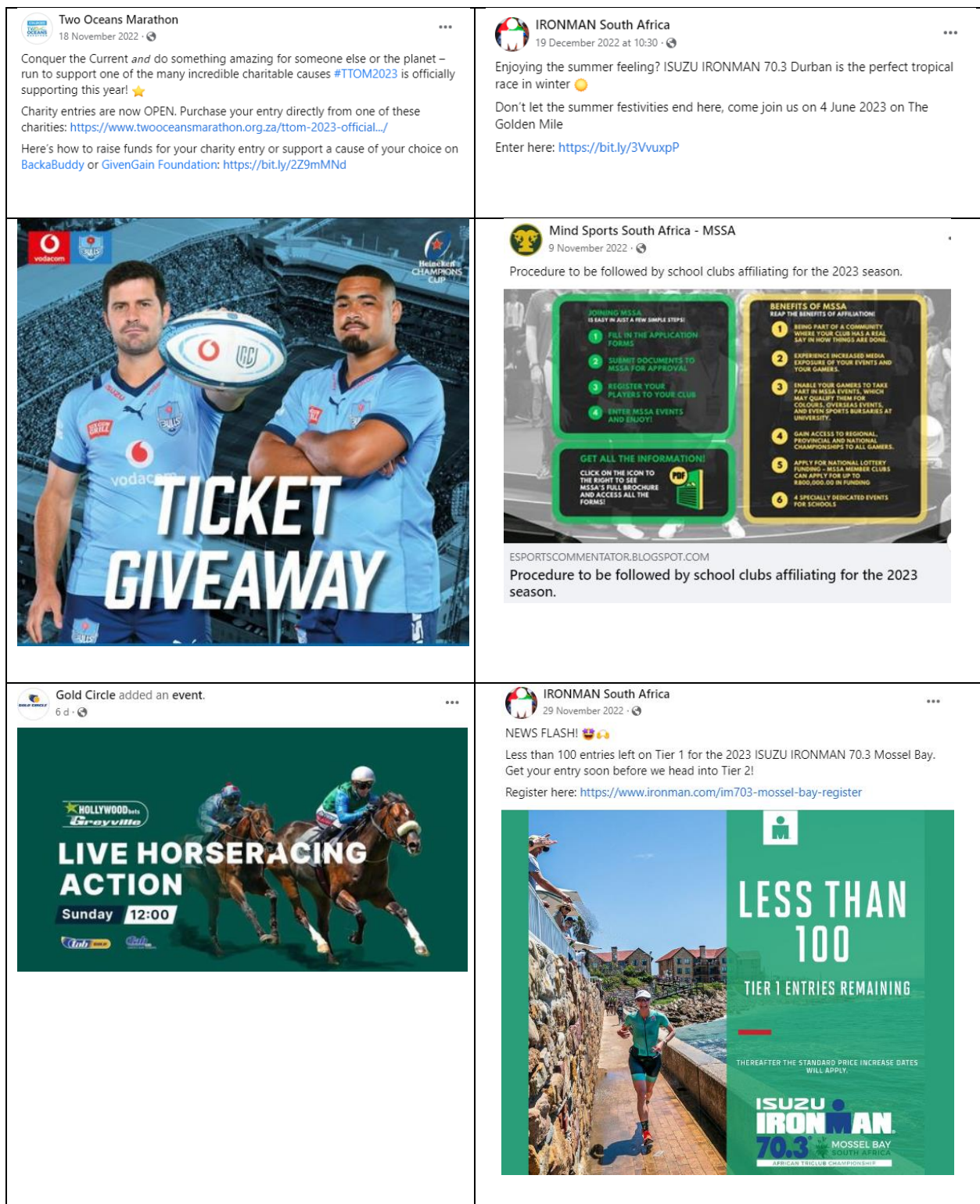


Figure 6-11: Example of posts to create traffic to sport organisation's website

6.3 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to answer the fourth research question, namely:

How do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of websites, Facebook and Instagram in their digital marketing to build relationships with sport stakeholders?

The question was answered by reporting on the results obtained from the qualitative content analysis of the participating sport organisations on how they used their websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts to build relationships with their stakeholders. The channels are well-maintained, regularly updated and accessible, and provide interactive communication and engagement.

The importance of digital integration in sport organisations' media channels was highlighted. It emphasised the need for a seamless connection between digital channels to provide a comprehensive user experience. The integration of various digital channels enables a cohesive and unified approach to user engagement, content creation, community nurturing and traffic generation.

It was evident in the analysis that user engagement was fostered through interactive elements such as likes, comments, direct messages, shares, reviews and polls. User-generated content was also used to enhance engagement and spread the message. This included encouraging stakeholders to share their experiences on social media channels using specific hashtags, which were then reposted by the sport organisations to further engage their audience. However, persuasive messages tended to blend into the stream of content, making it difficult for the users to identify with this content.

It was found in most of the Facebook and Instagram posts that the likes tab received the highest engagement. However, likes are the most straightforward and least meaningful form of engagement because they require minimal effort and might not necessarily translate into meaningful interaction or commitment from users. It would, therefore be more meaningful to focus on fostering deeper forms of engagement such as comments, shares, clicks on links and participation in polls or competitions. *Active engagement* can, thus, lead to stronger stakeholder relationships

Content was created through the production and publication of informative, entertaining and inspiring content across the website and social media channels. The content was also designed to provide information to both first-time and returning visitors, encourage participation and create a customer end-to-end experience. The analysis showed that content posted on Facebook was

reposted, mostly on Instagram, which implies a lack of content for the specific channels, resulting in simply reposting content. A more strategic content creation practice would be repackaging content for different channels to enhance the users' experience.

Although some content was available about the experiences of people who had participated in an event, the websites of both the events and team sport organisation did not provide for opportunities in the form of comments and online discussion forums or chat portals. Facebook does provide for stakeholders to post reviews, but the function does not seem to be used a lot. It was only on the sport events' Facebook pages that followers could rate the sport organisation and write a recommendation. Such content was not present on the team sport' Facebook pages at the time of the analysis. Reviews and ratings constitute direct feedback from the audience and can help sport organisations understand what they are doing well and where they need to improve, whether in terms of events, merchandise or overall fan experience. Positive reviews and high ratings can boost the credibility of the organisation and serve as social proof, showing new or potential fans that the organisation is trusted and valued by its existing community. Sport organisations could, thus, benefit from *community-driven engagement*.

Sharing content that resonates with stakeholders cultivates a sense of belonging and loyalty. Sport events establish community nurturing by posting entry information well in advance, giving participants time to prepare. They also use strategies such as giving out free entries to a few lucky entrants to foster a sense of community. Being responsive to comments and encouraging open dialogue was evident on the Facebook pages and Instagram accounts. While most of the responses to comments were focused on addressing queries, there is room for improvement in acknowledging positive feedback. Greater engagement with such comments could foster dialogue and nurture a stronger sense of community. *Community cultivation* can, thus, enhance the sport organisations' brand loyalty and drive higher participation and support from fans and stakeholders.

A great deal of effort was made to generate traffic to both the website and social media. This was achieved by sharing information that gets shared again and creates traffic. The sport organisations used their Facebook pages and Instagram accounts to drive traffic and attract more visitors to their websites by linking the content to their websites to expose users to more valuable content, such as race information, results and fixture lists. A downside is that traffic generation does not necessarily lead to more conversions because not all the visitors are interested in the sport organisation. More attention could, thus, be given to conversion than merely chasing the numbers. Sport organisations could rather concentrate on *conversion-focused traffic generation*

to attract visitors who are likely to engage further with the organisation, leading to meaningful conversions.

The findings relate to the research objective of creating a digital marketing framework customised to address the unique challenges encountered by sport marketers in South Africa. This is achieved by emphasising the significance of adopting a marketing approach that is digitally integrated, focused on engagement, and driven by strategic content. The primary objective of this framework is to improve stakeholder-centric experiences by effectively utilising digital channels to establish stronger connections and community bonds. This, in turn, will enhance the overall effectiveness and reach of sport marketing endeavours. This specialised approach acknowledges the distinct dynamics of sport marketing, which encompasses not only the promotion of events but also the cultivation of a fervent and involved community.

These findings emphasise the unique elements of digital marketing in sport, specifically the significance of community engagement and strong emotional bonds, which are less prominent in traditional marketing. In sport marketing, lasting relationships are prioritised and loyalty among sport stakeholders are nurtured. This is achieved through personalised content and shared experiences, rather than transactional interactions and broad consumer targeting.

In sum, the content analysis provided a detailed analysis of the digital marketing strategies of sport organisations. While it revealed the effective use of digital channels to build relationships and engage with stakeholders, areas for improvement were also noted in terms of user engagement, content creation, community nurturing and traffic generation.

CHAPTER 7 RESULTS OF THE ELECTRONIC SURVEY

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The study's primary aim was to present a framework for digital marketing for sport. Chapter 5, which contained the findings from the semi-structured interviews, provided insight into the digital marketing strategies that various sport organisations were implementing at the time of the interviews. This qualitative information aided in understanding how the differences, challenges and best practices were perceived by professionals in the field. Chapter 6 provided a practical evaluation of how the functionalities of websites, Facebook, and Instagram were utilised and how they could be enhanced or incorporated into a sport marketing framework. These insights, the analysis of the context of sport in South Africa in Chapter 2 and the literature study compiled in Chapter 3 provided an understanding of the existing landscape, thus serving as a foundation for developing a digital marketing framework optimised for sport organisations.

Some aspects of these relationships were further tested with sport stakeholders via the electronic survey to answer research question 1.4.4:

What are the perceptions of sport stakeholders on sport organisation's digital marketing?

The concepts and constructs identified in Chapter 4 that stem from the theoretical framework were used to develop the electronic survey to establish sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisations' marketing strategies. To achieve this, the researcher examined responses collected from a sample size through an electronic survey. The demographic information of sport stakeholders was noted to determine the representativeness of the sample for the research. The questionnaire was then divided into three sections on digital marketing management, digital marketing content experience and behavioural patterns (see section 4.7.1.3, Table 4.12). This forms the concluding phase in the methodical process, comprising semi-structured interview, qualitative content analysis, and electronic survey.

7.2 PRESENTATION OF STATISTICS

A summary of the participants' responses, is provided using frequency tables. Additionally, the average and standard deviation relating to each question is mentioned. The average was calculated by dividing the sum of all the values by the number of participants, indicating their responses based on the given scale (1 = completely disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = fully agree). The option of "don't know" was excluded to ensure data accuracy. The standard deviation is related to the average; a larger standard deviation indicates a spread in responses, whereas a

smaller standard deviation indicates more condensed responses (David & Sutton, 2010:482; see 4.8.2 above).

The purpose of these results is to quantitatively analyse and interpret the responses of the survey respondents. The usage of frequency tables, averages and standard deviations is intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the participants' opinions based on the given scale. This data then offers insights into the extent of agreement or disagreement among the participants about the questions asked.

7.2.1 Demographic information of the sport stakeholders

In this section, the demographic information of the stakeholders is described. Table 7.1 portrays this information, namely their genders, ages sport preferences and years of participation by specifying the frequency and percentage (%) thereof.

As Table 7.1 indicates, the majority (more than half of the sample) were male ($n = 75$; 64.66%). With regards to age distribution, the highest percentage of participants fell into the 51–60 year age group ($n = 41$), accounting for 35.04% of the total sample. The second largest group were in the 21–30 year age group ($n = 26$), accounting for 22.22% of the total sample. In terms of sport preference distribution, nearly half of the respondents indicated that they participated in road running ($n = 44$; 42.24%). The option about other sport ($n = 37$; 31.90) was the second largest group, which varied between lawn bowls, trail running, gym, parkrun and triathlon. Golf ($n = 27$; 23.28%), cycling ($n = 22$; 18.97) and rugby ($n = 19$; 16.38%) were also popular options.

Table 7-1: Demographic information of the respondents – genders, ages and sport preferences

Gender		
<i>N</i> = 116	<i>n</i>	%
Male	75	64.66
Female	41	35.34
Neutral	0	0
Total	116	100

Age		
<i>N</i> = 117	<i>n</i>	%
0–20	14	11.97
21–30	26	22.22
31–40	12	10.26
41–50	20	17.09
51–60	41	35.04
61 or more	4	3.42
Total	117	100
Sporting Code Participation		
<i>N</i> = 116	<i>n</i>	%
Rugby	19	16.38
Soccer	14	12.07
Cricket	16	13.79
Hockey	7	6.03
Netball	12	10.34
Cycling	22	18.97
Squash	7	6.03
Swimming	16	13.79
Golf	27	23.28
Tennis	9	7.76
Table Tennis	6	5.17
Badminton	2	1.72
Athletics	10	8.62
Road Running	49	42.24
E-gaming	4	3.45
Others	37	31.90
Total	116	100

Table 7.2 indicates the years of participation distribution, which shows that nearly all the respondents had participated in their preferred sporting code for more than 10 years.

Table 7-2: Demographic information about years of participation

Years of participation in sporting code						
N = 116		1–3	4–6	7–10	More than 10	Total of years participated
Rugby	%	0.00	18.18	27.27	54.55	22
	N	0	4	6	12	
Soccer	%	33.33	13.33	0.00	53.33	15
	N	5	2	0	8	
Cricket	%	25.00	17.75	18.75	37.50	16
	N	4	3	3	6	
Hockey	%	42.86	28.57	0.00	28.57	7
	N	3	2	0	2	
Netball	%	15.38	30.77	23.08	30.77	13
	N	2	4	3	4	
Cycling	%	22.73	22.73	22.73	31.81	22
	N	5	5	5	7	
Squash	%	30.00	40.00	10.00	20.00	10
	N	3	4	1	2	
Swimming	%	38.89	22.22	5.56	33.33	18
	N	7	4	1	6	
Golf	%	13.79	10.34	10.34	65.52	29
	N	4	3	3	19	
Tennis	%	36.36	9.09	9.09	45.45	11
	N	4	1	1	5	
Badminton	%	0.00	0.00	66.67	33.33	3
	N	0	0	2	1	
Athletics	%	33.33	8.33	33.33	25.00	12
	N	4	1	4	3	
Road Running	%	6.82	20.45	29.55	43.18	44
	N	3	9	13	19	
E-gaming	%	0.00	25.00	25.00	50.00	4
	N	0	1	1	2	
Others	%	47.65	14.71	20.26	47.06	34
	N	6	5	7	16	
Total						260

Table 7.2 shows the distribution of years of participation in various sport. More than half of those who had participated in sport such as rugby, soccer, golf and road running had done so for more than 10 years. Sport such as soccer, cricket, hockey, squash, swimming, tennis and athletics had a considerable percentage of participants in the 1–3-year range. Road running, squash, netball and cycling had an almost even distribution across the 1–3, 4–6 and 7–10-year brackets.

The years of participation might be helpful in terms of segmenting the audience and creating customised marketing content for each sport based on the experience level of its participant base. By tailoring the content according to the years of participation, digital sport marketers can engage their audiences more effectively, enhancing user experience and loyalty.

Table 7.3 is a summary of the social media channels the respondents were active on, as well as other digital marketing functionalities and typical actions they would take when visiting these channels.

Table 7-3: Social media channels sporting codes are active on

Social media channels sporting codes are active on		
Variable	%	Frequency
Facebook	82.61%	95
Instagram	49.57%	57
YouTube	48.70%	56
Twitter	22.61%	26
TikTok	16.52%	19
Pinterest	2.61%	3
LinkedIn	0.87%	1
Others (please specify)	8.70%	10
Total	100%	267

Other digital marketing channels sporting codes use to interact and engage		
Variable	%	Frequency
Email	69.83%	81
WhatsApp	68.10%	79
Website	53.45%	62
SMS	26.72%	31
Google Ads	21.55%	25
Blog	12.07%	14
SEO	6.03%	7
Others (please specify)	3.45%	4
Total responses	100%	303
Actions taken on a post on a sporting code's digital channels		
Variable	%	Frequency
Click like/love	77.59%	90
Share the post	56.90%	66
Write a comment	44.83%	52
Click on a link	39.66%	46
Subscribe to their YouTube channel	30.17%	35
Subscribe to their E-newsletter	17.24%	20
Subscribe to their blog	16.38%	19
Write a direct message	15.52%	18
Re-tweet	11.21%	13
Others (please specify)	1.72%	2
Total responses	100%	361

As seen in Table 7.3 the most popular social media channels' sporting codes were active on Facebook ($n = 95$; 82%), followed by Instagram ($n = 57$; 49.57%), YouTube ($n = 56$; 48.70%) and Twitter ($n = 26$; 22.61%). As the survey respondents fell in the age group of 51 to 60 years ($n = 41$; 35.04%), these statistics challenge common assumptions that older persons might not be as engaged on popular social media platforms, which are often associated with younger users. This insight could be an indication to sport marketers to adjust their digital strategies to ensure that they are effectively engaging this age group on these platforms.

The other digital marketing channels the respondents interacted and engaged with were email ($n = 81$; 69.83%), WhatsApp ($n = 79$; 68.10%) and websites ($n = 62$; 53.45%). Most of the respondents used the like or love button ($n = 90$; 77.59%) on the relevant channel. Other actions were to share a post ($n = 66$; 56.90%) or write a comment ($n = 52$; 44.83%).

The data suggests that sport organisations are successfully leveraging Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, which are important in digital marketing due to their large user bases and advanced targeting capabilities. Email marketing can be an effective way to deliver personalised content. WhatsApp can be used for creating community groups or for direct communication. Having an updated, user-friendly website can serve as a central hub for information. Most of the respondents used the like or love button, shared posts or wrote comments. This shows that the respondents were not just passive consumers of content but were also willing to interact and engage. The digital marketing strategy, should, therefore, not just aim to reach the audience but also to stimulate engagement.

These statistics are also in line with the content analysis, which showed that the sport organisations' Facebook pages had the biggest following. Also of significance is that it was mentioned in the semi-structured interviews that email was a key tactic in the marketing efforts and a CRM system was used to automate their email marketing (see section 5.2.1.7).

From the demographic information, it can be determined that content should be segmented for the target audience, marketers should understand stakeholder's preferred communication channels and content should be designed to not just disseminate information but also to encourage interaction and engagement.

7.3 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

In this section, the perceptions of sport stakeholders of the digital marketing strategy of sport in South Africa is presented with reference to the concept of *relationship building* and the constructs *interactive communication*, *stakeholder engagement* and *stakeholder end-to-end experience*.

The results of the electronic survey are discussed in relation to each concept below. The first section is a presentation of the descriptive statistics obtained from a four-point Likert scale of the items in Section C of the electronic survey (refer to Annexure D).

7.3.1 Relationship building in terms of interactive communication

The statistics from the answers to question 10, "*What is important for you when visiting your sporting code's website?*" illustrates the respondents' ratings of various features of a website. The

ratings range from “Not Important” to “Critical”.

Table 7-4: Respondents’ experience of interactive communication

	Not Important	Minor Importance	Important	Critical
The content should be informative and provide the information I am looking for.	0.00%	0.86%	45.69%	53.45%
The website should be easy to navigate.	0.00%	1.74%	43.48%	54.78%
The website must have a contact us section.	2.59%	12.93%	43.10%	41.38%
There should be a “connect with us on social media” section	6.96%	30.43%	42.61%	20.00%
There should be a photo gallery.	7.76%	21.55%	45.69%	25.00%
Option to subscribe to an electronic newsletter.	18.97%	43.10%	30.17%	7.76%
A section to leave a comment	10.34%	33.62%	40.52%	15.52%

The results show that the most important features for a website, as rated by the respondents, is having informative content and easy navigation. More than 90% of the respondents rated these features as important or critical (99.14%). A “contact us” section was also rated as important or critical by over 80% of the respondents (84.48%). Features related to social media and engagement, such as a "connect with us on social media" section (61%) and a section to leave a comment (56.04%) were rated as important or critical. A photo gallery was also rated as important or critical by more than 70% of the respondents (70.69%). The option to subscribe to an electronic newsletter was rated as not important or of minor importance (62.07%).

These statistics provide some understanding of what users prioritise when interacting with a website. The content should be informative and websites should be easy to navigate. Users appreciate easy communication with the organisation. It also showed that visual elements were valued. This information can guide sport organisations with respect to prioritising website features.

Understanding what features users value most on a website can guide the design of a user-centred and easy-to-navigate site that can serve as a powerful tool in a digital sport marketing

strategy. It underscores the importance of blending informative content, user-friendly design, interactivity and visual appeal to create a website that truly engages its audience.

The statistics align with the literature and the content analysis, which showed that the participating sport organisation's websites contained the necessary features to enhance interactive communication.

7.3.2 Relationship building in terms of stakeholder engagement

The ratings for statement 16, *"I will interact with content on my social channels in the following way"*, indicate how the respondents approached and perceived information from brands, and how they sought validation and confirmation of that information. The ratings ranged from "Never" to "Always".

Table 7-5: The respondents' experience of engagement

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Trust the information	1.75%	29.82%	57.89%	10.53%
Search for it on Google	1.75%	14.04%	58.77%	25.44%
Consult with my online community	21.05%	44.74%	28.95%	5.26%
I do not trust promises made by brands	5.26%	52.63%	37.72%	4.39%

The statistics show that most of the respondents trusted the information, with 57.89% choosing the option "Usually," followed by "Rarely" (29.82%), "Always" (10.53%) and "Never" (1.75%). This suggests that while a significant portion of the respondents trust the information they come across, there was still some scepticism towards it. More focus could, thus, be on building trust by providing accurate, credible and reliable information.

Most of the respondents (58.77%) searched for information on Google, followed by "Rarely" (14.04%), "Always" (25.44%) and "Never" (1.75%). This indicates that most of them used Google to search for information frequently and sport organisations should thus ensure that their websites, blogs and other online SEO content improves rankings, search results and visibility to attract more organic traffic. The interviewees had indicated that they did employ SEO as a strategy, although not specifically (see section 5.2.3.1), and the content analysis, showed high rankings for their websites.

Regarding the statement "*Consult with my online community*," most of the respondents (44.74%) chose "Rarely," followed by "Usually" (28.95%), "Never" (21.05%) and "Always" (5.26%). This suggests that online communities were not the primary source of information for most of the respondents. Strategies to engage with online communities, such as forum participation or running branded social media groups can help build relationships and foster trust with potential and existing fans or customers. In the content analysis of the participating sport organisations, it was evident that forums and chat portals were not present on their websites (see section 5.2.1.2 and 6.2.1.1) and that users did not write reviews. The literature, however, suggested that forums were important go-to places for stakeholders to verify and find information (see section 3.4.1).

For the statement "*I do not trust promises made by brands*", the highest percentage of respondents chose "Rarely" (52.63%), followed by "Usually" (37.72%), "Never" (5.26%) and "Always" (4.39%). This indicates that a significant portion of the respondents had some level of distrust of brand promises. Sport organisations should be transparent, authentic and consistent in their communication. Overpromising and underdelivering can damage a brand's reputation, so it is crucial to make promises that can be realistically fulfilled.

The most significant trend seemed to be the issue of trust and that a noteworthy segment was sceptical about the information on websites, which highlights that trust is a central concern for the audience. To address this, organisations should focus on building trust by delivering accurate, credible and reliable information and by being transparent and authentic in their communication. Given that most people rely on Google for information, enhancing the organisations' SEO strategy is crucial, not just for visibility but also for building trust through high-quality, reliable content.

7.3.3 Relationship building in terms of stakeholder end-to-end experience

The statistics for statement 15, "*I experience the following feelings when I am exposed to content about my sporting code*", illustrates the frequency with which the respondents experienced differing emotions when watching video ads, ranging from "Never" to "Always".

Table 7-6: The respondents' end-to-end experience

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Excited to watch the full video ad	7.02%	34.21%	45.61%	13.16%
Irritated and skipped the video ad immediately	15.65%	42.61%	29.57%	12.17%
Curious about what is going to follow	4.39%	33.33%	56.14%	6.14%
Feel my privacy is being invaded	28.70%	48.70%	19.13%	3.48%
Feel that I should have a choice to watch the ad or not	4.35%	16.52%	25.22%	53.91%

Almost half of the respondents (45.61%) felt excited about watching the full video advertisement and a small portion always felt this way (13.16%). However, a notable segment rarely felt excited (34.21%) and a few never did (7.02%).

The data suggests that the respondents were likely to be irritated by video advertisements, with a majority either skipping them immediately (42.61% rarely and 29.57% usually), or always skipping them (12.17%). Only a small group never felt irritated (15.65%).

Most of the respondents reported feeling curious about what was going to follow when they saw the advertisement (56.14% usually and 6.14% always). However, a third of the respondents (33.33%) rarely felt curious and a small group never felt this way (4.39%).

Most of the respondents rarely (48.70%) or never (28.70%) felt that their privacy was being invaded by these advertisements. However, some usually felt this way (19.13%) and a few always did (3.48%). More than half of the respondents (53.91%) always felt that they should have a choice of whether to watch the advertisement, while a quarter (25.22%) usually felt this way. A smaller group rarely (16.52%) or never (4.35%) felt that they should have this choice.

Of significance is the audience's emotional response to video advertisements: irritation and the desire for choice. Most of them were likely to be irritated by video advertisements and often skipped them. This reveals a potential point of resistance in the stakeholder journey that marketers should address. Meanwhile, more than half of the respondents felt strongly that they should have the choice of whether to watch the advertisement, highlighting a preference for user agency in the experience. Understanding these trends is critical for refining advertising strategies. The data suggests a need for less intrusive and more engaging advertisement formats, as well

as offering users the choice of whether to engage with the advertisement. While some respondents felt excited or curious about video advertisements, the overarching sentiment leaned towards irritation and a desire for control. Thus, future marketing efforts could benefit from focusing on user experience, offering choices and minimising annoyance to build a more effective and positive advertising environment.

Statement 17, *“I choose to watch sport in the following ways”*, elicited a variety of ratings for different levels of interaction and engagement that stakeholders have with various ways of accessing and consuming sport content. The ratings ranged from “Never” to “Always”.

Table 7-7: The respondents’ preferences for end-to-end experiences

	Almost Never	Seldom	Most Of The Time	Always
Attend a live event	8.70%	57.39%	30.43%	3.48%
Watch the full event on TV	6.09%	13.91%	54.78%	25.22%
Watch highlights on social media	7.83%	25.22%	48.70%	18.26%
Watch sport on live streaming mobile apps	20.00%	40%	29.57%	10.43%
Watch edited versions on YouTube	27.83%	38.26%	28.70%	5.22%

Most of the respondents seldom attended live sport events (57.39%), with a smaller group doing so most of the time (30.43%). Very few always attended live events (3.48%) and a minor segment almost never did (8.70%). More than half of the respondents (54.78%) watched the full event on TV most of the time and a quarter (25.22%) always did so. A smaller group seldom (13.91%) or almost never (6.09%) watched the full event on TV.

Nearly half of the respondents (48.70%) watched highlights on social media most of the time and some always did (18.26%). A quarter seldom watched highlights (25.22%) and a small portion almost never did (7.83%).

A sizeable group seldom watched sport on live streaming mobile apps (40%), while some did so most of the time (29.57%). A small number always watched sport this way (10.43%), but a significant portion almost never used mobile apps for live streaming (20.00%).

Most of the respondents seldom (38.26%) or almost never (27.83%) watched edited versions of sport events on YouTube. Some did so most of the time (28.70%), but very few always watched edited versions on YouTube (5.22%).

A preference for traditional TV viewing over other formats to consume sport content seems to still be important. This is in stark contrast to live sport event attendance, live streaming on mobile apps and edited versions on YouTube, with which the majority of the respondents either seldom or almost never engaged. Thus, despite the rise of digital channels and social media, traditional TV remains a dominant channel for sport consumption. While there is a noticeable interest in watching highlights on social media, live TV still captures the most consistent attention. Thus, strategies aiming to engage audiences might do well to prioritise TV broadcasting alongside other multi-channel approaches that complement this viewer behaviour. The results might stem from the fact that the demographic information showed that most of the respondents fell in the 51–60 age bracket, which suggests that they did not use digital technology extensively (see section 7.2.1).

7.4 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIGITAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT

In this section, the perceptions of stakeholders of the sport organisations' digital management is discussed with reference to the concepts of situation analysis, objectives, strategy, tactics, action and control. Each of these constructs is supplemented with the information obtained from the quantitative questionnaire to point out what sport stakeholders' perceptions are of the sport organisations' digital marketing management.

7.4.1 Situation analysis

For statement 14 about the *“important factors when choosing a sport brand”*, the statistics illustrate the ratings of the respondents for several factors that influenced their perceptions and attitudes towards brands. The ratings ranged from “Not important” to “Critical”.

Table 7-8: Respondents perceptions of situation analysis

	Not Important	Minor Importance	Important	Critical
The brand makes a noble promise	9.57%	33.91%	45.22%	11.30%
The product is cheap	18.26%	48.70%	25.22%	7.83%
The brand takes a stand regarding a good cause	13.04%	29.57%	41.74%	15.65%
I can engage with the brand	8.77%	22.81%	46.49%	21.93%
I can trust the brand	0.87%	0.87%	37.39%	60.87%
The brand is ethical	4.35%	8.70%	46.96%	40.00%
The brand asked my opinion	18.42%	32.46%	40.35%	8.77%

The results show that the respondents considered the trustworthiness of the brand to be critical, with 60% indicating that it was important or critical. The brand's ethics and the ability to engage with the brand were also important to 40% of the respondents. This correlates with the information provided in Table 7.8 that a significant portion of the respondents trusted the information on the sport organisations' websites.

Forty percent of the respondents also placed importance on the brand's noble promise and its stance on social issues. The ethical integrity of a brand and its commitment to noble promises were generally viewed as significant. A brand's ethical stance carries a lot of weight, with a high percentage of respondents having rated it as critical or important. Therefore, the emphasis in digital sport marketing strategies should be on demonstrating a brand's ethics and commitment to its promises.

A significant number of the respondents saw a brand taking a stand for a good cause as important (41.74%) or critical (15.65%). Some respondents deemed it important (40.35%) or of minor importance (32.46%) when a brand asked for their opinion, which can be linked to their ability to engage with the brand because the respondents perceived their ability to engage with a brand as important (46.49%) or critical (21.93%). On the other hand, most of the respondents regarded the product being cheap as of minor importance (48.70%) or important (25.22%). Some viewed it as critical (7.83%), but a notable portion found it not important (18.26%).

It seems, thus, that the respondents placed a high value on the trustworthiness and ethics of a brand, which appeared to be more influential than factors such as cost. The brand's ethical stance and its engagement with social causes were also highly rated. Moreover, a brand's commitment to noble promises and its willingness to ask for customer opinions were valued by a considerable number of respondents. Focusing on establishing trust and demonstrating ethical commitment should, thus, be at the forefront of marketing strategies. Brands in the sport industry might consider highlighting their ethical practices, contributions to social causes and avenues for customer engagement to align with these consumer values. Traditional selling points such as cost appeared to be secondary in the eyes of the respondents, emphasising the shift towards a more value-driven approach in stakeholder behaviour.

7.4.2 Objective

For statement 11, *“Digital marketing channels are the most effective tools sporting codes can use to market their sport”*, the statistics illustrate the agreement of the respondents with the statement. The ratings ranged from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”.

Table 7-9: The effectiveness of digital marketing channels

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Digital marketing channels are the most effective tools that sporting codes can use to market their sport or sport products.</i>	36.21%	55.17%	6.03%	2.59%

The results show that most of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, (55.17% and 36.21% respectively). Very few (8.62%) disagreed with the statement. This overwhelming majority reflects a sentiment that was broadly shared among the respondents. This could be crucial information for refining marketing strategies.

7.4.3 Strategy

The results for question 8, *“Tell us how effective you think the digital marketing strategies are in promoting your sporting code?”* in Table 7.10 illustrate the effectiveness ratings of the functionalities of digital marketing, as rated by the respondents. The ratings ranged from “Not Effective” to “Very Effective”.

Table 7-10: Respondents' perceptions of strategy

	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Google Ads	37.74%	33.96%	22.64%	5.66%
Social media ads	7.34%	30.28%	42.20%	20.18%
Direct email	20.91%	26.36%	38.18%	14.55%
E-newsletters	28.57%	43.81%	20.95%	6.67%
SMS	37.14%	32.38%	23.81%	6.67%
WhatsApp	6.42%	22.02%	30.28%	41.28%
Website	4.63%	21.30%	45.37%	28.70%
Blogs	18.56%	42.27%	26.80%	12.37%
Online Ads	24%	47%	22%	7%

A significant portion of the respondents found WhatsApp very effective (41.28%), with fewer considering it effective (30.28%). Most of the respondents found a website either effective (45.37%) or very effective (28.70%) for marketing. More respondents found social media ads effective (42.20%) or very effective (20.18%). Most of them found direct email somewhat effective (26.36%) or effective (38.18%). E-newsletters were seen as somewhat effective by the largest group (43.81%), with fewer considering it effective (20.95%) or very effective (6.67%). Google Ads was seen as not effective by the majority (37.74%), while 33.96% deemed it somewhat effective. The largest groups of respondents found SMSs not effective (37.14%) or somewhat effective (32.38%). Blogs were viewed as somewhat effective by the largest group (42.27%), with fewer respondents considering it effective (26.80%) or very effective (12.37%). The majority viewed online advertisements as somewhat effective (47.00%), with smaller percentages rating them as effective (22.00%) or very effective (7%).

In summary, websites and social media advertisements are perceived as the most effective strategies, with WhatsApp also rating highly. The least effective strategies, according to the respondents, are Google Ads and SMS. These insights can significantly shape a digital marketing strategy, emphasising the functionalities seen as most effective while reconsidering or reworking those perceived as less effective.

7.4.4 Tactics

The results for question 12, *“How do you make a buying decision for a sport product?”* show the frequency ratings of respondents for several functionalities of marketing. The ratings ranged from “Never” to “Always”.

Table 7-11: Respondents perceptions of tactics

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Visit the website	0.86%	25.86%	54.31%	18.97%
Acting on emails I receive	14.78%	56.52%	25.22%	3.48%
Social media ads	6.90%	43.97%	43.97%	5.17%
Ratings and reviews	10.43%	30.43%	45.22%	13.91%
Testimonials	18.26%	33.04%	37.39%	11.30%
Word-of-Mouth	3.48%	14.78%	58.26%	23.48%
Recommendations from family and friends	3.48%	13.91%	55.65%	26.96%
Google searches	0.00%	26.96%	55.65%	17.39%
Online advertising	4.35%	48.70%	40.00%	6.96%
Direct marketing	14.91%	50.88%	25.44%	8.77%
Print advertising	24.78%	50.44%	23.89%	0.88%
Telemarketing	73.91%	20%	6.09%	0.00%

The majority of the respondents usually (54.31%) or always (18.97%) visited the website, with only a small proportion never doing so (86%). This high preference for using websites shows that a well-designed, user-friendly and informative website is critical, as also specified in the literature (see section 3.4.2.1).

More than half (56.52%) rarely made a buying decision on the basis of received emails, while a quarter (25.22%) usually did so. These mixed results might be an indication that sport organisations lack personalisation and delivering value to stakeholders.

The respondents were split equally between usually and rarely interacting with social media advertisements (both 43.97%), which might suggest the importance of targeted and relevant advertising to suite the preferences and behaviours of stakeholders.

Nearly half of the respondents (45.22%) made decisions based on ratings and reviews, while a notable proportion (13.91%) always did so. A significant proportion of the respondents also usually (55.65%) or always (26.96%) acted on recommendations from family and friends. Most of the respondents either rarely (33.04%) or usually (37.39%) acted on testimonials. This finding is contrary to what was found in the content analysis (see section 6.2.1.1), where it was indicated that although such options are available on the sport organisations' Facebook pages, visitors rarely interact on them. Given the high preference to act on ratings and reviews, as well as

testimonials, in the respondents' view, sport organisations should encourage visitors to social media pages to leave reviews and share their experiences.

Word-of-mouth continues to be highly influential because most of the respondents usually (58.26%) or always (23.48%) engaged with word-of-mouth recommendations, underlining the importance of delivering excellent service and experience that users will want to share with others (see section 3.4.1.3).

More than half of the respondents usually (55.65%) took decisions when searching on Google, while a substantial proportion always did so (17.39%). Almost half of the respondents (48.70%) rarely interacted with online advertising, while 40% usually did so. Half of the respondents (50.88%) rarely responded to direct marketing, with a quarter (25.44%) usually doing so. The majority of them either rarely (50.44%) or never (24.78%) interacted with print advertising. Most of the respondents (73.91%) never engaged with telemarketing, making it the least effective tactic among the options.

Visiting the website, engaging with word-of-mouth recommendations and acting on recommendations from family and friends were the tactics most respondents would respond to when make a buying decision. Telemarketing and print advertising, on the other hand, were the least preferred, suggesting less effectiveness for these methods in the context of digital sport marketing.

7.4.5 Action

The results from question 13, *"Which of the following content types does your sporting code use to engage with you?"* show the frequency ratings of respondents for several types of content or media. The ratings ranged from "Never" to "Always".

Table 7-12: The respondents perceptions of actions

	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Blog articles	41.28%	27.52%	27.52%	3.67%
E-newsletters	26.36%	29.09%	36.36%	8.18%
Social media posts	4.39%	12.28%	42.98%	40.35%
Infographics	16.81%	48.67%	30.09%	4.42%
Photographs	7.02%	21.05%	50.00%	21.93%
Illustrations	19.09%	37.27%	37.27%	6.36%
How-to videos	13.27%	38.05%	33.63%	15.04%
Vox pops	62.04%	28.70%	7.41%	1.85%
Sport videos	9.73%	20.35%	46.90%	23.01%
Podcasts	34.86%	32.11%	22.94%	10.09%
Music	50.91%	30%	13.64%	5.45%
Soundbites	52.29%	32.11%	13.76%	1.83%

The results shows that the largest group of respondents (41.28%) indicated that the sporting code never interacted with them through blog articles, with equal proportions of respondents (27.52%) rarely or usually have that perception. Most of the respondents usually (36.36%) or rarely (29.09%) felt that the sporting code interacted with e-newsletters. The majority of them usually (42.98%) or always (40.35%) felt that the sporting code interacted with them through social media posts. Nearly half of them (48.67%) found it with infographics, while a considerable proportion (30.09%) usually interacted with them. Half of the respondents (50%) found that the sporting code usually interacted with photographs.

Most of the respondents usually (33.63%) or rarely (38.05%) felt that the sporting code interacted with them through how-to videos. Most of them (62.04%) found that the sporting code never interacted with vox pops. Nearly half of the respondents usually found interaction by sporting codes through videos (46.90%), with a significant proportion always experience interaction with sporting codes through videos (23.01%). Most of them never (34.86%) or rarely (32.11%) experienced interaction through podcasts or music, while a considerable proportion (30%) rarely did.

In summary, it seems that the respondents felt that sporting codes interacted with them through social media posts and photographs, while vox pops, music and soundbites were the channels they interacted with least. This indicates that a digital marketing strategy should prioritise social media posts and visual content for maximum engagement.

7.4.6 Control

The results for question 7, “*What actions will you take on a post on a digital channel?*” illustrate the frequency ratings of the respondents for various actions taken on digital channels.

Table 7-13: The respondents perceptions of control

What actions will you typically take on a post on your sporting code's digital channels? You may choose more than one.		
Variable	%	Frequency
Click like/love	77.59%	90
Share the post	56.90%	66
Write a comment	44.83%	52
Write a direct message	15.52%	18
Re-tweet	11.21%	13
Subscribe to their blog	16.38%	19
Click on a link	39.66%	46
Subscribe to their YouTube channel	30.17%	35
Subscribe to their e-newsletter	17.24%	20
Others (please specify)	1.72%	2
Total responses	100%	361

The statistics highlight the respondents' interaction tendencies with respect to online content. The majority of them (77.59%) reported clicking “like” or “love” as their most common form of engagement, signifying a relatively passive but positive interaction with the content, an aspect that was also pointed out in the content analysis (see section 6.2.1.1). This was closely followed by sharing the post, with 56.90% of the respondents choosing to disseminate content they found valuable or interesting.

On the other hand, writing a comment was a less frequent form of engagement, with less than half (44.83%) of the respondents participating in this way. The statistics show that more direct forms of interaction, such as writing a direct message (15.52%) and re-tweeting (11.21%) were even less prevalent, suggesting that users might be less inclined to participate in these types of active engagements.

Subscriptions, indicative of a long-term engagement, were relatively infrequent, with 16.38% subscribing to blogs, 30.17% to YouTube channels and 17.24% to e-newsletters. This suggests

that while the respondents might have been willing to engage with individual pieces of content, they were less likely to commit to ongoing engagement without strong incentives or interest.

Clicking on a link (39.66%) was a more common form of engagement than subscriptions, possibly due to the ease of this action and the immediate gratification provided by accessing linked content.

A negligible number of respondents (1.72%) reported other unspecified forms of interaction, indicating that the main categories of engagement were largely comprehensive.

Overall, these responses highlight the need for digital marketing strategies to focus on creating content that encourages not just passive interactions such as likes, but also more active forms of engagement such as sharing, commenting and subscribing to foster deeper connections with their audience.

7.5 THE RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUNCTIONALITIES OF DIGITAL MARKETING

7.5.1 Website

For question 9, *“How satisfied are you with the information of your sporting code on their website?”* (see table 7.14), the statistics illustrate the satisfaction ratings of respondents with the information provided on a particular sport organisation’s website. The ratings ranged from “Very Satisfied” to “Very Unsatisfied”.

Table 7-14: Respondents perceptions of the sport organisation’s website

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
I am very satisfied with the information on their website.	20.87%	68.70%	4.35%	6.09%

These data indicate that the large majority of the respondents (20.87% and 68.70%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the information on their sporting code’s website. A small percentage (4.35% and 6.09%) were either unsatisfied or very unsatisfied. Overall, these results suggest that most of the stakeholders were satisfied with the sporting code’s information on their website.

7.5.2 Social media

The statistics for question 5, *“On which social media channels are your sporting code active?”* illustrates the frequency ratings of respondents for several social media channels.

Table 7-15: Respondents perceptions of the sport organisation’s social media channels

On which social media channels are your sporting code active on? You may choose more than one.		
Variable	%	Frequency
Facebook	82.61%	95
Instagram	49.57%	57
YouTube	48.70%	56
Twitter	22.61%	26
TikTok	16.52%	19
Pinterest	2.61%	3
LinkedIn	0.87%	1
Others (please specify)	8.70%	10
Total	100%	267

The statistics reflect the respondents’ perceptions of the sporting code’s social media channels on which sporting codes are active. Facebook was the clear leader, with a substantial 82.61% of the respondents indicating that the sporting code was active on Facebook. This could be because most of the respondents were also active on Facebook.

Instagram and YouTube followed, with 49.57% and 48.70% of the respondents indicating that these were the channels they found sporting codes to be active on. Their multimedia nature made them suitable for visual and video content often associated with sport; hence their popularity among sporting codes.

The respondents indicated that they saw sporting codes active on X (Twitter), known for its real-time updates and news, implying it might not be as impactful for broad engagement with stakeholders.

TikTok, a newer channel known for its shortform video content, was seen to be used by a smaller portion of sporting codes (16.52%) to engage with stakeholders. This could be due to the channel’s relative newness, or its younger user base.

A very low percentage of respondents indicated that Pinterest (2.61%) and LinkedIn (0.87%) were channels that sporting codes were active on. Given the nature of these channels, with Pinterest being more lifestyle-oriented and LinkedIn being primarily professional, these low figures were

not surprising. About 8.70% of the respondents specified other channels, such as Snapchat, WhatsApp and WeChat, which represent less mainstream or niche social media channels.

Overall, these results indicate that the stakeholders were aware that sport organisations were active on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube and preferred to visit these channels when seeking information.

The next section deals with factor analyses and the factors that were withdrawn based on best interpretability.

7.6 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

As stated in section 4.7.2, factor analysis is used to evaluate the correlations between variables and to scrutinise the entire set of interdependent relations among variables. Factor analysis represents a broad category of approaches aimed at conceptualising groups or clusters of variables to determine which variables belong to which group. The factor loadings of the constructs were calculated and could vary from -1.0 to 1.0. Only the factors with the highest loading were analysed. The higher the value, the more information a specific factor explained regarding the questions in the questionnaire. This was applicable to all the factor analyses throughout this chapter. Principal component analyses were done with Oblimin Rotation to extract the factors. The questions were divided into the following factors, which could be withdrawn according to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and mean inter-item correlation (see section 4.8.6).

7.6.1 Factors identified

Table 7.16 gives an indication of how the questions on the stakeholders' perception of the digital marketing strategies were grouped together. Two factors were extracted, explaining 46.6% of the total variance, namely *digital advertising* and *content marketing*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.65, which indicates that enough data is available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the factors, which were 0.67 and 0.6 respectively. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.28 and 0.26 respectively. This implies that the data were reliable because the levels of reliability were acceptable.

Table 7-16: Stakeholders' perception of the digital marketing strategies

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Digital advertising	Content marketing
Google Ads	0.49	
Social media ads	0.56	
Direct email	0.68	
E-newsletters		0.59
SMS	0.74	
WhatsApp	0.72	
Website		0.77
Blogs		0.83
Online Ads		0.44
Cronbach's Alpha	0.67	0.6
Mean inter-item correlation	0.28	0.26
Mean	2.47	2.61
Standard deviation	0.65	0.61

The first factor was identified as digital advertising ($m = 2.47$, $STD = 0.65$) because these were focused primarily on direct communication and promotion with individual stakeholders or potential customers. Google Ads and social media advertisements were used to target specific audiences with paid advertisements, while direct email, SMS and WhatsApp were used to send targeted messages directly to individuals.

The second factor was identified as content marketing ($m = 2.47$, $STD = 0.61$). This content was focused primarily on creating and distributing content that interacted and engaged stakeholders and provided information about the organisation, its events and activities. These functionalities of digital marketing – e-newsletters, blogs, websites and online advertisements – foster a connection between the organisation and its stakeholders by providing regular updates, sharing insights and promoting events or activities. Through content marketing, sport organisations can establish themselves as trusted sources of information, thereby building a strong and loyal community of followers. These groups are important for effective digital marketing and their use depends on the organisation's goals and target audience.

Table 7.17 shows how the question about the importance of relevant information on the sport organisation's website were grouped together. Two factors were extracted, explaining 51.6% of

the total variance, namely *interactivity and engagement* and *content and website functionality*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.65, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.7 and 0.37 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.37 and 0.18 respectively. This implies that *interactivity and engagement* were not reliable, whereas *content and website functionality* were reliable because the levels of reliability were acceptable.

Table 7-17: The importance of relevant information on the sport organisation's website

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Content and website functionality	Interactivity and engagement
The content should be informative and provide the information I am looking for.		0.77
The website should be easy to navigate.		0.74
The website must have "a contact" us section.		0.38
There should be a "connect with us on social media" section.	0.82	
There should be a photo gallery.	0.67	
Option to subscribe to electronic newsletter.	0.78	
A section to leave a comment.	0.59	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.7	0.37
Mean inter-item correlation	0.37	0.18
Mean	2.63	3.53
Standard deviation	0.52	0.63

Content and website functionality ($m = 2.63$, $STD = 0.52$) as the first factor was identified because it is focused on the importance of user experience of the website and ensuring that the latter provides the information the user is looking for. A user-friendly, easy-to-navigate website with relevant and easily accessible information is vital to engage visitors and convert them into loyal followers or customers. This implies that the sport organisation should invest in website design and development, ensuring it is mobile-friendly, has a clear navigation structure and offers

comprehensive, easily accessible information. Including a contact section would further facilitate direct communication, making it easier for users to get in touch with the organisation.

Interactivity and engagement ($m = 3.53$, $STD = 0.63$) were identified as a second factor because it highlights the critical role of interactivity and engagement in digital marketing. By creating opportunities for users to interact and engage, for instance, through social media, comments or photo galleries, the organisation can foster a strong sense of community and loyalty. “Connect with us on social media” prompts and options to subscribe to newsletters can keep users updated and engaged with the organisation’s latest activities. The addition of a comment section invites users to share feedback, potentially providing valuable insights for the organisation.

In essence, these findings show that the sport organisations focus on providing a digital user experience and interactivity for user satisfaction, engagement and to foster a strong, connected community around their brand, which could lead to increased brand loyalty, higher user retention rates and more effective marketing campaigns.

The next table demonstrates how the questions about the buying decisions of stakeholders were grouped together. Three factors were extracted that explained 38.1% of the total variance, namely *marketing activities*, *learning about the organisation* and *learning about the organisation through family and friends*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.65, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach’s Alpha was 0.69, 0.63 and 0.76 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the factors were 0.27, 0.30 and 0.62 respectively. This implies that the data was reliable because the levels of reliability were acceptable.

Table 7-18: The buying decisions of stakeholders

Pattern Matrix ^a			
	Component		
	Marketing activities	Informing stakeholders	Word- of- mouth
Visit the website		0.84	
Acting on emails I receive	0.57		
Social media ads	0.43		-0.39
Ratings and reviews		0.71	
Testimonials		0.64	
Word-of-mouth			-0.89
Recommendations from family and friends			-0.87
Google searches		0.49	
Online advertising	0.53		
Direct marketing	0.71		
Print advertising	0.73		
Telemarketing	0.65		
Cronbach's Alpha	0.69	0.63	0.76
Mean inter-item correlation	0.27	0.30	0.62
Mean	2.12	2.71	3.04
Standard deviation	0.44	0.54	0.66

The first factor was identified as marketing activities ($m = 2.12$, $STD = 0.44$), which underscores the importance of a variety of marketing and promotional activities. These efforts should aim to enhance the visibility of the organisation and its services or products, thereby attracting and engaging potential stakeholders. Therefore, sport organisations should deploy diverse marketing methods, including traditional and digital advertising, social media marketing, event marketing, influencer marketing and others, based on their target audience's preferences and behaviour.

The second factor identified was informing stakeholders ($m = 2.71$, $STD = 0.54$) because it relates to the value of offering comprehensive information about the organisation and its offerings. This factor implies that potential stakeholders often want to learn more about an organisation before engaging with it. Therefore, sport organisations should focus on clear, effective communication of their values, mission, products, services and other relevant information. This communication

can take place across various channels – websites, social media, blogs, newsletters and more – and should aim to inform, engage and eventually convert potential stakeholders.

The third factor, word-of-mouth ($m = 3.04$, $STD = 0.66$), highlights the powerful influence of personal connections and recommendations. Learning about the organisation through family and friends points to the significance of word-of-mouth marketing, based on trust and personal relationships. Sport organisations should, therefore, strive to create positive experiences that customers will want to share. They should also consider strategies that encourage and facilitate these exchanges, such as referral programmes, user-generated content and community-building activities.

The results point to an integrated approach to digital marketing that focuses on a range of marketing activities, being open, providing useful information about the organisation and using the strength of personal recommendations. This could make digital marketing more effective, which could lead to more visibility, engagement and loyalty among stakeholders.

Table 7.19 gives an indication of how the types of content sport organisations use to interact and engage with stakeholders were grouped together. Two factors were extracted that explained 51.5% of the total variance, namely *text-based content* and *audio-based content*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.79, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.86 and 0.63 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.44 and 0.30 respectively. This implied that the data were reliable as the levels of reliability were acceptable.

Table 7-19: Types of content sport organisations use to interact and engage with stakeholders

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Audio-based content	Text-based content
Blog articles		0.57
E-newsletters		0.83
Social media posts		0.67
Infographics		0.52
Photographs	0.49	
Illustrations	0.83	
How-to videos	0.64	
Vox pops	0.62	
Sport videos	0.54	0.33
Podcasts	0.33	0.48
Music	0.78	
Soundbites	0.84	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.86	0.63
Mean inter-item correlation	0.44	0.30
Mean	2.42	2.21
Standard deviation	0.62	0.62

The first factor, audio-based content, ($m = 3.04$, $STD = 0.66$) are often employed to deliver information or education on specific topics. They are typically designed to be engaging and easily shareable. Examples include podcasts, audio blogs or audio snippets. Considering the growing popularity of audio formats, especially with the rise of channels such as Spotify and Clubhouse, sport organisations can post audio content to connect with their audiences in an intimate, conversational manner.

The second factor, text-based content ($m = 2.21$, $STD = 0.62$) relates to visual content formats such as articles, blogs, white papers and guides, and are crucial for sharing detailed information and thought leadership. On the other hand, visual and audio content such as images, infographics, videos or sound clips, can engage audiences in a more interactive, immersive way.

Both groups of content are important for an informed digital marketing strategy. The choice between them should depend on the organisation's objectives, the nature of the content and the

preferences of the target audience. It is important to note that a balanced content strategy often has a blend of formats to cater for various audience preferences and consumption patterns.

Table 7.20 demonstrates how the factors that are important when choosing to support a sport brand were grouped together. Three factors that explained 57.5% of the total variance, namely *brand messaging*, *brand reputation* and *pricing*, were extracted. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.71, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.77 and 0.64 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.45 and 0.50 respectively. This implies that the data were reliable because the levels of reliability were acceptable.

Table 7-20: Factors that are important when choosing to support a sport brand

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Brand messaging	Brand reputation
The brand makes a noble promise	0.84	
The product is cheap		
The brand takes a stand regarding a good cause	0.79	
I can engage with the brand	0.63	
I can trust the brand		0.94
The brand is ethical		0.72
The brand asked my opinion	0.73	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.77	0.64
Mean inter-item correlation	0.45	0.50
Mean	2.80	3.40
Standard deviation	0.64	0.58

The first factor, brand messaging ($m = 2.80$, $STD = 0.64$), deals with the language, tone and themes that a brand uses to communicate with its stakeholders, which can significantly impact trust-building and loyalty. It suggests that sport organisations must carefully craft and consistently maintain their brand messaging across all digital channels. This includes the choice of words, the tone of voice and the overarching narratives that resonate with their audiences' interests, values and aspirations. Whether it is about promoting sportmanship, advocating for inclusivity or celebrating athletic achievement, the brand messaging should be clear, authentic and engaging

to effectively connect with and mobilise stakeholders.

The second factor, brand reputation ($m = 3.40$, $STD = 0.58$), highlights the importance of brand reputation. This points to how stakeholders perceive the organisation's integrity, ethical values and overall standing in the community. Increasingly, stakeholders support organisations that not only provide quality products and services, but also operate responsibly, ethically and transparently. For a sport organisation, this means ensuring fair practices, promoting positive sporting behaviours, demonstrating commitment to social causes and actively responding to stakeholders' concerns. A solid reputation increases trust, stimulates support and can even command a premium on offerings because stakeholders tend to pay more for products from brands they trust and share values with.

These factors suggest that sport organisations should prioritise clear, consistent and resonant brand messaging and invest in activities that foster a positive and ethical brand reputation. Both are key to building trust, nurturing stakeholder loyalty and enhancing overall brand value in the long run.

The next table gives an indication of how the stakeholders' feelings when exposed to content from the sport organisation were grouped together. Two factors that explained 68.5% of the total variance, namely *negative reactions to advertisements* and *positive reactions to advertisements* were extracted. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.60, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.69 and 0.66 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean the inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.44 and 0.51 respectively. This implies that the data were reliable because the levels of reliability are acceptable.

Table 7-21: Stakeholders feelings' when exposed to content from the sport organisation

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Negative reactions to advertisements	Positive reactions to advertisements
Excited to watch the full video ad		0.87
Irritated and skip the video ad immediately	0.72	
Curious about what is going to follow		0.85
Feel my privacy is being invaded	0.87	
Feel that I should have a choice to watch the ad or not	0.76	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.69	0.66
Mean inter-item correlation	0.44	0.51
Mean	2.55	2.63
Standard deviation	0.68	0.64

The first factor, negative reactions to advertisements ($m = 2.55$, $STD = 0.68$), corresponds to positive reactions to video advertising. This indicates that when an advertisement is engaging, visually appealing and contextually relevant, it captures the viewer's attention and arouses positive reactions. Therefore, sport organisations should strive to produce content that is informative, entertaining and inspirational, and that aligns with their audience's interests and values (see section 6.2.1.2).

The second factor, positive reactions to advertisements ($m = 2.63$, $STD = 0.64$), corresponds with negative reactions to video advertising. This highlights the risk of ad intrusion, where viewers might find video advertisements disruptive, poorly targeted or unappealing, leading to negative responses. Hence, sport organisations need to be cautious when balancing their promotional ambitions with their audience's receptiveness. This involves the thoughtful targeting and scheduling of video advertisements, giving viewers the option to skip them and ensuring that the advertisements provide value or entertainment rather than simply pushing a sales agenda.

These factors highlight the importance of creating video advertisements that are not only engaging and relevant but also respectful of viewers' preferences and privacy. This balance is key to maximising positive viewer engagement while minimising potential backlash.

Table 7.22 gives an indication of how the stakeholders' interactions with content on their social media channels were grouped together. Two factors were extracted that explained 58.4% of the total variance, namely *level of trust in content* and *level of distrust in content*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.50, which indicated that sufficient data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.22 and 0.28 respectively, indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.13 and 0.16 respectively. This implies that the data were not reliable because the levels of reliability were not acceptable.

Table 7-22: Stakeholders interaction with content on their social media channels

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Level of trust in content	Level of distrust in content
Trust the information	0.75	
Search for it on Google		0.71
Consult with my online community	0.69	
I do not trust promises made by brands		0.80
Cronbach's Alpha	0.22	0.28
Mean inter-item correlation	0.13	0.16
Mean	2.57	2.62
Standard deviation	0.63	0.62

The first factor, level of trust in content ($m = 2.57$, $STD = 0.63$), relates to how the degree of trust users place in the content impacts their decision-making processes. A high level of trust might encourage consumers to engage with the organisation's online community, relying on the trustworthiness and reliability of the content shared by the brand. As such, sport organisations should aim to cultivate credibility and trust in their content by ensuring accuracy, transparency and authenticity. Engaging with their online community, responding to queries and demonstrating expertise can enhance this trust.

The second factor, level of distrust in content ($m = 2.62$, $STD = 0.62$), indicates that a level of scepticism or distrust also influences how users seek information. In this case, individuals might

resort to independent sources such as Google to verify the claims made by the brand. They might express doubt about the brand's promises, showing a need for independent confirmation. For sport organisations, this implies that they should anticipate and respect their audience's critical thinking and desire for validation. Providing clear, verifiable information, citing credible sources and avoiding over-promising can help mitigate such scepticism.

To build trust, therefore, trustworthiness is vital in a digital marketing strategy for sport organisations. Both trust and distrust factors should be considered when creating and delivering content to build a credible and reliable brand image, which is essential for effective engagement and conversion.

The next table gives an indication of factors concerning how stakeholders prefer to watch sport were grouped together. Two factors were extracted that explained 62.1% of the total variance, namely *experience of a live event* and *experience of a digital event*. The Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.56, which indicated that enough data was available to indicate the factors. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.63 and 0.35 respectively indicating reliability. The mean inter-item correlations of the two factors were 0.37 and 0.22 respectively. This implies that the experience of a digital event is not reliable, whereas the experience of a live event is reliable.

Table 7-23: Stakeholders prefer to watch sport

Pattern Matrix ^a		
	Component	
	Experience of a digital event	Experience of a live event
Attend a live event		0.76
Watch the full event on TV		0.73
Watch highlights on social media	0.84	
Watch sport on live streaming mobile apps	0.62	0.48
Watch edited versions on YouTube	0.78	
Cronbach's Alpha	0.63	0.35
Mean inter-item correlation	0.37	0.22
Mean	2.29	2.40
Standard deviation	0.67	0.66

The first factor, experience of a digital event ($m = 2.29$, $STD = 0.67$), highlights how fans can engage with sport through digital channels, including social media, live streaming apps and YouTube. These channels often offer edited highlights or snippets of the event, providing a form of engagement that is different to a live experience. For sport organisations, this means they should focus on creating compelling digital content that captures the essence of the event and drives engagement. Short, engaging content, such as highlights or behind-the-scenes insights, can be especially effective in this context.

The second factor, experience of a live event ($m = 2.40$, $STD = 0.66$), underlines the impact of the complete live experience, whether experienced in-person or via traditional broadcast media. This immersive, unedited perspective can drive a strong emotional connection with the event and the sporting brand. For sport organisations, it is critical to enhance this live experience, focusing on aspects such as seamless broadcasting, interactive opportunities during the event and exclusive benefits for live viewers or attendees.

This analysis suggests that a sport organisation should balance its efforts between enhancing the live event experience and offering engaging digital content. Recognising the distinct advantages of both experiences, organisations can tailor their strategies to cater to a wider range of audience preferences, thus expanding their reach and engagement.

7.7 COMPARISON OF FACTORS ACCORDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

7.7.1 T-Test

The following section is a summary of the influence gender had on the factors. The t -test was used to determine the statistical and practical significance of factors, and the effect sizes were used to determine the relevance. When the p -value is smaller than 0.05, it indicates a statistically significant difference, but not necessarily that the demographic information has an influence on the factor. The effect sizes give an indication of the practical significance of the factors (see section 4.7.4). Table 7.24 is a summary of the practical significance of the effect sizes in a t -test.

Table 7-24: Practical significance of the effect sizes in a t -test

Effect sizes	Interpretation
$d = 0.2$	Small effect
$d = 0.5$	Medium effect
$d = 0.8$	Large effect

The effect size indicates the practical significance of the relationship between two variables. In instances where the effect sizes are larger than or equal to 0.5, it indicates that the relationship between the variables is practically significant.

In table 7.25, the *t*-tests on the factors that have a *p*-value smaller than 0.05 are shown. They indicate that the factors were statistically significant. The factors with effect sizes larger than 0.3 were identified to indicate that they were practically relevant. However, because it was not a random sample, the statistics cannot be generalised. The *p*-value was provided only to make the statistics comprehensive and to focus on the interpretation of effect sizes.

Table 7-25: The *t*-test in terms of gender

How do you define yourself?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Cohen's d effect size
Q9_ I am....	Male	74	2.01	0.71	0.240	0.23
	Female	40	1.85	0.70		
Q11 Digital marketing channels are the most effective tools that sporting codes can use to market their sport or sport products.	Male	75	1.73	0.70	0.753	0.06
	Female	40	1.78	0.66		
Q16 Trust the information	Male	74	2.74	0.64	0.434	0.16
	Female	39	2.85	0.67		
Q16 Search for it on Google	Male	74	3.05	0.66	0.598	0.11
	Female	39	3.13	0.73		
Q16 Consult with my online community	Male	74	2.19	0.81	0.955	0.01
	Female	39	2.18	0.88		
Q16 I do not trust promises made by brands	Male	74	2.41	0.66	0.971	0.01
	Female	39	2.41	0.68		
Q18 How would you rate your sporting code's overall digital marketing presence?	Male	73	3.60	0.94	0.728	0.07
	Female	37	3.68	1.08		
F17 Attend live	Male	74	2.35	0.65	0.137	0.30
	Female	40	2.15	0.70		
F17 Watch the full event	Male	74	3.00	0.72	0.769	0.06
	Female	40	2.95	0.93		
F17 Online sport experience	Male	74	2.39	0.65	0.855	0.04
	Female	40	2.42	0.71		

How do you define yourself?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Cohen's d effect size
F15 Advertisements, emotional	Male	74	2.39	0.65	0.692	0.08
	Female	40	2.61	0.64		
F15 Advertisements, negative attitudes	Male	74	2.54	0.63	0.921	0.02
	Female	40	2.55	0.76		
F14 Marketing strategy	Male	74	2.78	0.65	0.61	0.10
	Female	40	2.84	0.65		
F14 Stakeholder experience	Male	74	3.30	0.61	0.005	0.53
	Female	40	3.60	0.50		
F14 Low prices	Male	74	2.24	0.84	0.912	0.53
	Female	40	2.23	0.83		
F13 Information sharing	Male	74	2.44	0.58	0.623	0.10
	Female	39	2.37	0.71		
F13 Content formats	Male	74	2.24	0.57	0.46	0.15
	Female	40	2.14	0.70		
F12 Product research	Male	75	2.70	0.53	0.782	0.06
	Female	40	2.73	0.57		
F12 Marketing	Male	75	2.13	0.47	0.984	0.00
	Female	40	2.13	0.40		
F12 Advocacy	Male	75	3.01	0.65	0.641	0.09
	Female	40	3.08	0.68		
F10 Informative content	Male	75	3.45	0.53	0.047	0.38
	Female	40	3.65	0.48		
F10 Easey to navigate	Male	74	3.50	0.56	0.465	0.14
	Female	40	3.58	0.50		
F10 Contact us	Male	75	3.15	0.82	0.078	0.33
	Female	40	3.40	0.67		
F10 Shareholder engagement	Male	75	2.61	0.63	0.782	0.05
	Female	40	2.64	0.61		
F8 Advertising	Male	75	2.42	0.60	0.185	0.28
	Female	40	2.60	0.72		

How do you define yourself?		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	P-value	Cohen's d effect size
F8 Content marketing	Male	74	2.41	0.61	0.614	0.11
	Female	34	2.35	0.63		

The table shows that the most of data had a small effect. Men had a slightly lower *stakeholder experience* ($m = 3.30$, $STD = 0.61$, $d = 0.53$) than women, which might imply that the current strategies might resonate better with women or that men might have different preference or expectations.

In addition, men also measured less with *informative content* ($m = 3.45$, $STD = 0.53$, $d = 0.38$) than women. This could suggest a few possibilities; for instance, it might be that the current content does not appeal as much to men, or that men prefer different formats, channels or types of content.

The fact that stakeholder experience and low prices had a medium effect size indicates that these factors might have a more noticeable impact on men's engagement or satisfaction. Therefore, emphasising affordability or value for money in marketing campaigns might be particularly effective for this demographic. Likewise, efforts to enhance the stakeholders' experience could pay dividends in terms of improved engagement and satisfaction, especially for men.

While these patterns provide valuable insights, they might not capture the full range of experiences and preferences within each gender group. As such, these suggestions should be used as starting points for further exploration and testing rather than definitive strategies.

7.7.2 Comparison of factors according to age

Comparing factors according to age can provide valuable insights into the ways in which different age groups might be affected by various circumstances and conditions. In table 7.26, the Spearman rank order correlation coefficient was used as statistical measures to indicate the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables and age, in which 0.01 indicates a small correlation, 0.3 a medium correlation and 0.5 a high correlation. In this case, the correlation coefficients suggested that there was a weak inverse relationship between age and each of the factors being considered.

Table 7-26: Comparison of the extracted factors in terms of age

		What is your age?
F17 Experience of a live event	Correlation Coefficient	-0.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.303
	N	115
F17 Watch full event	Correlation Coefficient	-.242**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.009
	N	115
F17 Experience of a digital event	Correlation Coefficient	-.281**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002
	N	115
F15 Positive reactions to ads	Correlation Coefficient	-0.063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.505
	N	115
F15 Negative reactions to ads	Correlation Coefficient	0.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.492
	N	115
F14 Brand messaging	Correlation Coefficient	-.236*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.011
	N	115
F14 Brand reputation	Correlation Coefficient	-.228*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.014
	N	115
F14 Cheap	Correlation Coefficient	-.190*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.041
	N	115
F13 Audio-based content	Correlation Coefficient	0.068
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.473
	N	114
F13 Text-based content	Correlation Coefficient	-0.128
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.173
	N	115

		What is your age?
F12 Content marketing channels	Correlation Coefficient	-0.097
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.302
	N	116
F12 Direct messaging channel	Correlation Coefficient	0.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.733
	N	116
F12 Digital advertising channels	Correlation Coefficient	-0.078
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.404
	N	116
F10 Information	Correlation Coefficient	-0.147
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.114
	N	116
F10 Ease navigate	Correlation Coefficient	-0.105
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.266
	N	115
F10 Contact us	Correlation Coefficient	-0.003
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.975
	N	116
F10 Content and website functionality	Correlation Coefficient	-0.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.360
	N	116
F8 Advertising	Correlation Coefficient	.184*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.048
	N	116
F8 Content marketing	Correlation Coefficient	-0.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.864
	N	109

In Table 7.26, we can see that a medium correlation existed between the factors of age and experiencing a sport event, as the correlation for a live event was -.242 and for digital event was -.281. This implies that older people tend to watch their sport on television rather than having a digital experience. A medium to a small correlation also exists between age and brand messaging

(-.236), brand reputation (-.228), and pricing (-.190). It can be concluded that older respondents tend not to find brand messages, reputation and product pricing as important as the younger respondents, who might find a digital experience more important. A small correlation also exists between age and the factor of advertising (.184), which might indicate that older people are more influenced by certain channels of advertising than younger respondents.

7.8 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE FACTORS

In this section, a comparison between the extracted factors and individual items was drawn. The Spearman rank order correlation coefficient gives an indication of the relation between the variables, which enables the researcher to establish how the value of one variable relates to the value of another. Correlations specify the relations between the factors, where 0.1 indicates a small correlation, 0.3 a medium correlation and 0.5 a high correlation. The correlations that were extracted are discussed in this section.

As shown in Table 7.27 below, a high and medium correlation existed between *watch full event* and *searching for more information on Google* (.389), as well as for a digital event (.207). This might suggest that sport participants, fans and supporters who watch the full event will look for information on digital channels. A medium correlation existed between a digital experience and consulting with their online community (.230), which indicates that they would also turn to their online community for information about an event. Experiencing a live event (.200) and rating their digital marketing presence had a small correlation, which might indicate that both were experienced in the same way by the respondents.

Adding to that, as presented in Table 7.27, it also seems that participants, fans and supporters do not trust the information displayed in advertisements and generally react to advertisements in a negative way because there was a high correlation between them (.312). However, a high correlation (.408) also existed between how they rated the sporting code's digital marketing presence and reacting positively to advertisements.

In the next table on page 191, Table 7.28, there was a medium correlation between a sport organisation's digital marketing (-.209) and brand messaging, which could indicate that brand messaging is not popular on digital channels. However, a high correlation existed between brand messaging (.440) and brand reputation (.350) and Google searches, which could mean that sport organisations could focus their messaging and brand reputation more on websites and SEO marketing.

Table 7-27: Correlation between Google searches and watching an event

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F17 Watch full event	Correlation Coefficient	-0.021	-0.018	0.081	.389**	0.008	-0.035	.200*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.821	0.845	0.393	0.000	0.935	0.712	0.035
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111
F17 Experience of a digital event	Correlation Coefficient	-0.145	-0.108	0.024	.207*	.230*	0.124	0.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.123	0.249	0.799	0.027	0.014	0.190	0.285
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111

Table 7-28: Correlation between advertisements and digital marketing presence

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F15 Positive reactions to ads	Correlation Coefficient	-0.102	-0.080	0.147	0.179	0.160	0.006	.408**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.280	0.397	0.118	0.057	0.088	0.947	0.000
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111
F15 Negative reactions to ads	Correlation Coefficient	0.006	0.074	-0.105	0.150	0.042	.312**	-0.144
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.951	0.432	0.265	0.110	0.658	0.001	0.131
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111

Table 7-29: Correlation between digital marketing, trust, searches and brand reputation, brand messaging and pricing

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F14: Brand messaging	Correlation Coefficient	0.014	-.209*	.188*	.440**	0.150	0.028	0.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.883	0.025	0.045	0.000	0.111	0.765	0.058
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111
F14 Brand reputation	Correlation Coefficient	0.129	-0.166	0.096	.350**	0.082	0.012	0.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.170	0.077	0.311	0.000	0.388	0.896	0.076
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111
F14 Cheap	Correlation Coefficient	-0.149	0.089	0.087	0.157	0.112	.224*	-0.036
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.114	0.344	0.355	0.095	0.237	0.017	0.710
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111

A high correlation was found between a sport organisation's digital marketing (-.404) and audio-based content, suggesting that the latter might not be popular on digital channels (see Table 7.29, page 192). It seems, though, that audio-based content is more trusted by participants, fans and supporters because it had a medium correlation of .217. Audio-based content had a high correlation with a sport organisation's digital marketing presence (.470), which could indicate that audio in the form of video content is much preferred. Text-based content (.314) had a high correlation with consulting with their community, which could show that they would verify information first before acting on it. A high correlation also existed between text-based content (.320) and the sport organisation's overall digital presence, which could indicate that text-based content is preferred.

As seen in Table 7.30 on page 194, content marketing channels showed a high correlation with Google searches (.366), which shows that participants, fans and supporters will look for content on search engines. It seems they will also consult with their community (.250) about the content, which showed a medium correlation. There is a medium correlation between direct messaging (2.66) and trusting the information, indicating that content in the form of face-to-face, SMS and email is trusted more. Direct messaging was also verified by the community because it had a high correlation of .302. Direct messaging also had a high correlation (.355) with the sport organisation's overall digital presence, which could indicate it is a preferred marketing tool.

Table 7.31 on page 195, depicts a medium correlation of .227 between informative information and digital marketing presence, which shows that sport participants, fans and supporters found information informative on the sport organisations' digital channels. There was a medium correlation between website navigation (.249) and Google searches. Websites should, thus, be easily findable but also easy to navigate. A medium correlation also existed between content and website functionality (.240) and trusting content. This shows that the respondents trusted the content on a sport organisation's website.

On page 196 in table 7.32, we see that a high correlation existed between advertising (.313) and a sport organisation's digital presence, indicating that sport participants, fans and supporters see Google and social media advertisements as relevant marketing tools. With regards to content marketing (.366), they found direct emails, e-newsletters and SMS relevant. A medium correlation existed between content marketing (.212) and trusting information. This indicates that they found the sport organisation's content trustworthy.

Table 7-30: Correlation between digital marketing and trust and types of content

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F13 Audio-based content	Correlation Coefficient	-0.159	-.404**	.217*	0.173	0.181	-0.043	.470**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.093	0.000	0.020	0.065	0.054	0.647	0.000
	N	113	114	114	114	114	114	111
F13 Text-based content	Correlation Coefficient	-0.170	-0.082	0.063	0.140	.314**	-0.037	.320**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.070	0.381	0.507	0.138	0.001	0.699	0.001
	N	114	115	114	114	114	114	111

Table 7-31: Correlation between searches, information, consulting and digital marketing channels

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F12 Content marketing channels	Correlation Coefficient	-0.022	-0.131	0.098	.366**	.250**	-0.032	.209*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.817	0.163	0.297	0.000	0.007	0.732	0.028
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111
F12 Direct messaging channel	Correlation Coefficient	-0.148	-0.146	.266**	0.052	.302**	-0.052	.355**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.114	0.118	0.004	0.585	0.001	0.585	0.000
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111
F12 Digital advertising channels	Correlation Coefficient	-0.031	0.035	0.082	0.110	0.055	-0.018	-0.051
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.738	0.710	0.384	0.242	0.564	0.853	0.594
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111

Table 7-32: Correlation between information, searches, digital presence and website

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F10 Informative content	Correlation Coefficient	0.055	-0.033	0.030	0.184	0.038	0.056	.227*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.560	0.724	0.752	0.051	0.686	0.557	0.017
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111
F10 Ease navigate	Correlation Coefficient	0.016	0.019	0.183	.249**	0.004	-0.115	0.177
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.866	0.842	0.052	0.008	0.964	0.225	0.064
	N	114	115	113	113	113	113	110
F10 Contact us	Correlation Coefficient	0.033	-0.121	0.176	0.044	0.028	-0.052	0.141
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.728	0.195	0.061	0.639	0.767	0.583	0.140
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111
F10 Content and website functionality	Correlation Coefficient	-0.077	-0.103	.240*	.217*	0.160	-0.067	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.411	0.272	0.010	0.020	0.089	0.481	0.004
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111

Table 7-33: Correlation between information and presence and digital channels

		Q9: Gender	Q11: Digital marketing channels	Q16: Trust the information	Q16: Google searches	Q16: Consult with my online community	Q16: I do not trust promises made by brands	Q18: Digital marketing presence
F8 Advertising	Correlation Coefficient	-0.050	-0.172	0.074	0.145	-0.118	0.012	.313**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.592	0.064	0.433	0.123	0.212	0.896	0.001
	N	115	116	114	114	114	114	111
F8 Content marketing channels	Correlation Coefficient	-0.016	-0.164	.212*	0.113	-0.021	-0.076	.366**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.870	0.088	0.027	0.243	0.828	0.431	0.000
	N	108	109	109	109	109	109	106

In summary, as shown in table 7.33, page 197, it seems stakeholders look for information that they can trust on digital channels and turn to family and friends for information about an event. They react negatively to advertisements, but a high correlation existed on how they rated the sporting code's digital marketing presence. Audio-based content is possibly not popular on digital channels, but it is more trusted by participants, fans and supporters. Text-based content and direct messaging are preferred marketing formats and they trust the content on a sport organisation's website. They find Google and social media advertisements relevant marketing channels and direct emails, e-newsletters and SMSs relevant content marketing channels.

7.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter contained the empirical results for the quantitative part of this research. An electronic survey was administered to facilitate answering the fifth specific research question:

What are the sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisations' digital marketing? (see section 1.4.5).

The research question was answered with the information obtained from the questionnaire, which indicated sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisation's digital marketing strategies.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of the factors, which indicated that the data were reliable because all the levels of reliability were acceptable. A *t*-test was also conducted to determine the statistical and practical significance of the factors by using effect sizes to determine the relevance. A *t*-test was conducted on the factors dealing with gender, which showed that there was no effect of gender on the statistical or practical significance on the factors. Correlations were also drawn between the factors and sport stakeholders' ages, genders, digital marketing functionalities, trust, Google searches, consulting of community, promises by brand and digital presence.

Table 7.34 provides a summary of the identified concepts and factors, which were grouped together based on their thematic relevance. This thematic grouping will enable sport organisations to better identify and focus on key areas within their digital marketing strategies, leading to a more targeted and efficient use of resources and, ultimately, more successful marketing outcomes.

Table 7-34: Thematic grouping of concepts and factors

Thematic Group	Related Concepts
Functionalities of digital marketing	Digital advertising, content marketing, marketing activities
Website and content characteristics	Content and website functionality, interactivity and engagement, text-based content, audio-based content
Learning and perception of the organisation	Informing stakeholders, word-of-mouth, brand messaging, brand reputation
Consumer reactions and trust of advertising	Negative reaction to advertisements, positive reactions to advertisements, level of trust in content, level of distrust of content
Experiencing events	Experiencing a live event, experiencing a digital event
Concepts related to overall digital marketing strategy	Relationship building, digital marketing management, digital marketing functionalities

Functionalities of digital Marketing: Understanding which functionalities to use is fundamental to crafting a marketing strategy that can effectively reach target audiences. This was also specified in the literature (see section 3.4.2) and in the semi-structured interviews. The functionalities will include using paid advertisements, content marketing and other marketing activities to effectively convey the organisation's message.

Website and Content Characteristics: The functionality and content of a website significantly influence user experience and engagement (see section 3.4.2.1). Hence, organisations need to ensure that their sites are easy to navigate and contain relevant text-based and audio-based content to keep users engaged and informed.

Learning and Perception of the Organisation: The brand reputation and messaging are central to how stakeholders perceive the organisation. Sport organisations need to ensure transparency and consistency in their communication to build a reliable brand image (see section 3.3.2). They also need to understand how stakeholders are learning about them and their offerings.

Consumer Reactions and Trust of Advertising: Monitoring the audience's reactions to advertisements and their trust level in the content could help sport organisations to adjust their marketing strategies (see section 3.4.1). They can work on minimising negative reactions and enhancing positive ones to create a trustworthy relationship with their audiences.

Experiencing Events: With the growing popularity of digital events, understanding the difference in how live and digital events are experienced can help to craft appropriate marketing strategies

for each. This can help the organisation increase attendance and engagement with both their live and digital events.

Concepts Related to Overall Digital Marketing Strategy: Relationship building, digital marketing management and the appropriate use of the functionalities of digital marketing are core concepts that need to be incorporated into the marketing strategy. A strong focus on building relationships with stakeholders and effective management of the marketing process can significantly enhance the sport organisations' outreach and engagement.

CHAPTER 8 A DIGITAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study was to develop a digital marketing framework that can be applied the sport industry in South Africa. To create such a framework, it was argued that the sport industry is unique because it comprises three sectors (government sector, non-profit sector and corporate sector), and sport marketing consists of 3 pillars (marketing of sport, marketing through sport and marketing by sport). Each of these sectors and pillars have its own distinct characteristics. Moreover, these sectors are interconnected and are not stand-alone entities (see paragraph 2.4). It was also argued that these sectors were influenced by several factors (see paragraph 2.5).

Within this unique context, the three sport sectors cut across a range of various stakeholder groups, such as participants, supporters and fans, clubs and franchises, potential sponsors, manufacturers, associations, wholesalers, and retailers. Sport marketers face the challenge of effectively reaching and engaging with these stakeholders, especially with the evolution of new technology. This should be executed within the three pillars of sport marketing (marketing of sport, marketing through sport and marketing by sport). To address this challenge, it is argued in this study that sport marketers should focus on the management of digital marketing and the utilisation of the appropriate functionalities of digital marketing in order to build relationships with stakeholders. By doing so, they can enhance their marketing efforts and create meaningful connections with their target audience.

In this concluding chapter, the aim is to provide a framework the sport sectors can utilise in their digital marketing efforts This will be done by firstly answering the secondary research questions in order to ultimately answer the general research question namely:

Which concepts should a digital marketing framework consist of to address the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa? (see paragraph 1.3).

This question will be answered by examining the sport context in South Africa and the principles of digital marketing that pertain to relationship building. This will serve as the foundation for the literature analysis. Next, the results of the empirical research, which include semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and electronic surveys, will be presented. Finally, the proposed framework for sport marketing will be introduced.

8.2 CONTEXT OF SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

It was argued, that to be able to explore a digital marketing framework for sport organisations, a contextual overview of sport in South Africa was necessary to guide an exploration of the research problem; therefore, the first research question posited was: *What factors influence sport marketing in South Africa, according to the literature?* (see paragraph 1.4.1).

The purpose of a context chapter was to provide insight into the environment in which sport marketing functions in South Africa, as it typically differs from country to country. Understanding the context is essential for creating successful digital marketing strategies tailored to the distinct features of the South African sport industry.

The unique nature of sport marketing distinguishes it from marketing practices in other industries, primarily because of the profound emotional connection that stakeholders have with sport. Sport is unique because of the unpredictable outcome of events, the emotional engagement of fans, the diversity of stakeholders, community building and the complexity of the brand. The sport sector also spans three different sectors.

The interconnectedness of the government, non-profit and corporate sectors in sport was emphasised, with the government providing subsidies for sport infrastructure and the non-profit sector creating opportunities for community participation and athlete development. This infrastructure also supports professional sport, which involves franchises operating on a provincial level. The corporate sector then markets sport to fans and supporters, often with monetary returns.

New technology had a significant impact on sport organisations' communication with stakeholders and the promotion of not only sport as a product but also sport products. The digitisation of sport and the fan experience can, therefore, be seen as an opportunity to enhance engagement, build brand value and create interactive experiences for fans both inside and outside the stadium.

It was also emphasised that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a transformation of the sporting experience, leading to the development of new content and engagement strategies, especially through digital channels and social media. The pandemic created new opportunities for the sport industry, with increased digital entertainment spending and a need for agile, responsive and creative sport marketers to provide quality content and community engagement.

The sport marketing industry in South Africa needs a versatile and flexible strategy designed to address the specific challenges and opportunities in the sport sector. This approach is based on three primary pillars: marketing of sport, marketing through sport, and marketing by sport (see

paragraph 2.5.4). These pillars are essential for improving the economic sustainability of the sport industry, increasing its scope, and strengthening stakeholder involvement. They cultivate a symbiotic relationship between sport and marketing, which enhances the growth and levels of engagement in the industry. The unique nature of sport marketing distinguishes it from marketing practices in other industries, primarily due to the profound emotional connection of stakeholders with sport. This connection enhances the effectiveness of marketing endeavours and offers the versatility to not only promote the sport itself, but also utilise sport as a medium for marketing unrelated products and services. Figure 8.1 provides an illustration of the context of sport depicted by literature.



Figure 8-1: The unique context of sport in South Africa

This specific research question was addressed in Chapter 2 in the form of a literature study, which gave rise to the first guiding argument:

The literature showed that some of the aspects that influence sport marketing in South Africa are the fact that the sport sector forms part of the government, non-profit and the corporate sectors, as well as the diverse sport environment. Sport has also experienced a significant transformation due to new technology and the COVID-19 pandemic.

8.3 UTILISING DIGITAL MARKETING IN RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH SPORT STAKEHOLDERS

In this section, the current literature was analysed to identify concepts that would impact the development of a digital marketing framework in order to answer the second research question: *What principles of digital marketing are effective in building relationships, according to the literature?* (see paragraph 1.4.2).

It was argued in chapter 3 that sport organisations should adapt their marketing approaches to focus on relationship building with stakeholders, which gave rise to the second guiding argument:

The concept of marketing has changed over the years due to the advances in the environment, the market and consumer behaviour. This requires sport organisations to adapt their marketing approach to relationship building through interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience (see section 3.3). Doing so would provide the foundation to address the unique challenges facing the sport sectors.

Interactivity allows stakeholders to actively participate and provide valuable data, while engagement builds trust, loyalty and a better stakeholder experience (see paragraph 3.3.2). The stakeholder end-to-end experience – from initial contact to well after that – is essential for long-term relationships. Hence, the importance of stakeholder centricity, personalised and customised experiences and community building.

Thus, digital sport marketing in South Africa can involve the use of websites and social media channels to create interactive, engaging and personalised experiences that strengthen stakeholder relationships.

The significance for digital sport marketing in South Africa, therefore, lies in the potential to leverage the channels of digital marketing, such as websites and social media channels, to create stakeholder centric, interactive, engaging, and personalised experiences that enhance relationships with stakeholders throughout their journey.

To achieve relationship building, it was argued that a digital marketing strategy should be put in place to manage the direction the sport organisation wants to take and formulate actions on how to accomplish its goals, which gave rise to the third specific guiding argument:

The focus on tracking progress, achieving goals, organisation workflow and gathering market information is universal in marketing. However, in the context of sport, these activities are rooted in the industry's fast, event-driven cycles and the emotional bonds that stakeholders have with

sport teams and athletes. Sport organisations must, therefore, be quick to react and be sensitive to and emotionally connected to their stakeholders. To gain a competitive advantage, they must take a specialised approach to managing their digital strategy, which includes situation analysis, setting objectives, strategy formulation, tactical implementation, action and control.

The digital marketing strategy of a sport organisation guides the selection of campaigns, content and marketing software to achieve specific goals, emphasising a partnership with its organisational strategy. It also outlines how the organisation should execute its mission and track progress (see paragraph 3.5.2). Experiences and content should be customised to cater to the distinct preferences of sport stakeholders, thereby improving their transition from passive observers to engaged participants. Marketers should also align with the internet's cultural dynamics by understanding and integrating the collaborative, traditional, co-creation, and prosumption market systems into their strategies (see paragraph 3.5.1). This should enhance stakeholder engagement across the sport sector and offer a comprehensive strategy to effectively utilise digital channels within the three pillars of sport marketing, namely marketing of sport, through sport, and by sport. Such strategic integration fosters community engagement, personalisation, and a sense of loyalty among stakeholders, facilitating smoother transactions and more efficient interactions. Ultimately, these practices contribute to a robust digital sport marketing strategy, fostering deep, lasting relationships with stakeholders and ensuring the sport sector remains vibrant and connected with its stakeholders.

The digital marketing strategy was analysed using the SOSTAC® model (see paragraph 3.5.3) supported by the seven Cs model (see paragraph 3.4.1), collectively offering a structured framework for developing a sport marketing strategy that incorporates all elements of the process and recognising overlaps in the planning stages. To execute a digital marketing strategy, the sport organisation must deliberate on which functionalities of digital marketing to use, which informed the fourth specific guiding argument:

Digital marketing involves using the channels of digital marketing such as websites, mobile devices and social media channels. Sport organisations should, therefore, execute digital marketing campaigns through, for example, websites and social media channels such as a) Facebook and b) Instagram.

Previous scholars have emphasised that websites and social media are organisations' virtual representations. The website is central to the digital marketing strategy and the aim is to provide an easy user interface and experience. A well-designed and optimised website boosts brand awareness, digital presence, stakeholder engagement and digital marketing success (see paragraph 3.5.4.1).

Social media channels are crucial for stakeholder engagement. Sport organisations can instantly respond to inquiries, comments and feedback on Facebook and Instagram. Using videos, images and interactive content will boost brand awareness and build an online presence.

Websites, social media channels, email marketing and other digital channels are utilised to distribute relevant content and updates about sport organisations and their offerings. However, it is the integration of these functionalities that ensures a seamless flow of information across various channels. By integrating their digital marketing efforts, sport organisations will enhance a stakeholder centric approach by providing a cohesive and comprehensive user experience, in which stakeholders can access information effortlessly and engage with the brand through multiple touchpoints. This integration enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering information to stakeholders, strengthening their connection with the sport organisation (see paragraph 3.5.4).

In the digital marketing landscape, sport sectors recognise the importance of relationship building and leveraging the functionalities of digital marketing to provide valuable content. This strategic approach allows them to establish enduring relationships with stakeholders who will not only return but also share their experiences with others. Moreover, the significance of digital integration within sport organisations has been emphasised, highlighting the need for seamless connectivity between the various digital channels. By integrating various digital marketing functionalities, sport organisations can focus on stakeholder centricity to provide a comprehensive stakeholder experience by enhancing stakeholder engagement, creating compelling content, nurturing communities and generating traffic. This integration enhances the overall effectiveness and efficiency of digital marketing strategies in the sport sector.

In summary, and to answer the second research question, it is evident that digital marketing in the sport industry is changing. A shift away from traditional marketing strategies towards ones with a focus on building relationships is evident. Sport organisations are urged to use a complete digital marketing framework that combines the functionalities of digital marketing to build and maintain these relationships. Establishing relationships within the sport environment is particularly crucial. This is accomplished by adopting a stakeholder-centric approach, focusing on personalised and customised experiences, interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and end-to-end stakeholder experiences, as well as by using analytics to become data-driven (see paragraph 5.3). Sport has the capacity to elicit intense emotions and foster a sense of community, providing an ideal environment for cultivating deep relationships. Interactive communication has the potential to convert inactive stakeholders into engaged stakeholders, thus enhancing the sport experience and strengthening stakeholder commitment.

In addition, stakeholder engagement initiatives such as exclusive content have the potential to increase emotional investment, not only in the sport but also in the organisations and brands associated with it. Numerous opportunities for engagement and interaction are generated by ensuring that stakeholders have a complete experience throughout the entire event. This is essential in sport, as every phase presents unique possibilities for crafting unforgettable experiences, be it the anticipation preceding an event, the exhilaration experienced during, or the contemplation that follows. By taking advantage of the distinctive attributes of the sport setting, this comprehensive strategy fosters deep, enduring connections with stakeholders (see paragraph 3.3.2). Relationship through interactive communication, stakeholder engagement, and end-to-end stakeholder experiences is, therefore, included as an important component in the digital marketing framework.

Figure 8.2 depicts how literature reflects the digital marketing principles used for building relationships with sport stakeholders.

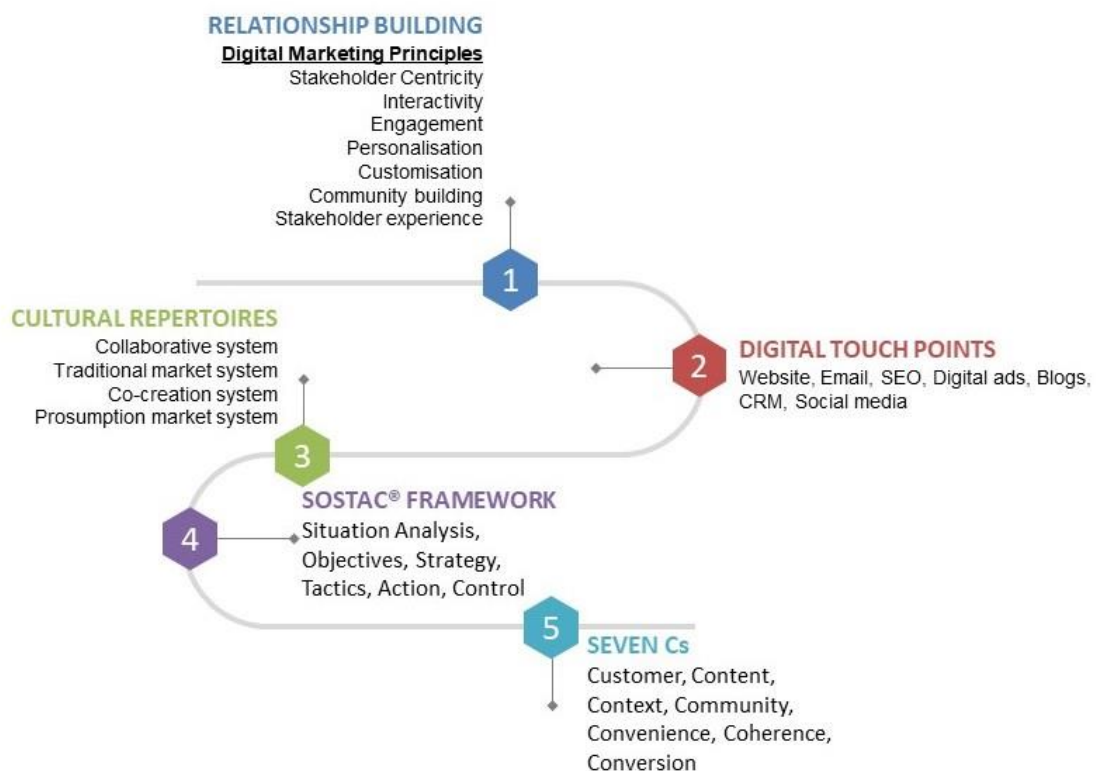


Figure 8-2: Digital marketing principles for relationship building derived from literature

Figure 8.2 demonstrates that the proposed digital marketing framework for sport should begin by establishing strong stakeholder relationships through targeted principles like engagement and

personalisation across various digital touchpoints, including social media and CRM. These touchpoints operate within cultural repertoires that define the context of interactions, dictating tailored marketing approaches. Strategic oversight is provided by the SOSTAC® framework, ensuring that each aspect of digital marketing – from planning to control – is carefully managed. Underpinning this entire structure are the seven Cs, which ensure a holistic, stakeholder-focused approach, fostering coherence and customer value across all digital marketing activities.

This rationale supported the development of the fifth specific guiding argument:

Digital channels are a strategic asset for sport organisations, integrating the functionalities of a website and social media marketing. Sport organisations should, therefore, enhance user interaction and engagement, foster content creation, nurture a sense of community among stakeholders and drive traffic to their website.

8.4 THE DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES USED BY SPORT ORGANISATIONS

Semi-structured interviews were the optimal method to establish which digital marketing strategies sport organisations were using in order to answer the third research question: *What digital marketing strategies are used by sport organisations in South Africa?* (see paragraph 1.4.3).

The semi-structured interviews generated insights into the current practices, challenges and opportunities within the sport sectors indicating the components that should be included in a digital marketing framework. Understanding the landscape from the perspective of a sport marketer revealed which strategies are effective, which are underutilised and what gaps exist in current practices. This evidence-based approach ensured that the digital marketing framework was not only theoretically sound, but also practical and tailored to the South African sport sector's specific needs and challenges. As a result, the findings from these interviews were essential for developing a solid and efficient digital marketing framework.

The findings from the semi-structured interviews were presented and discussed in chapter 5 in relation to the guiding arguments, defined concepts and constructs set out in Chapter 4, Table 4.2.

8.4.1 Relationship building

The sport marketers indicated that *interactive communication*, including post-event surveys and social media channels, was utilised to gather feedback from stakeholders (see paragraph 5.2.1.1). The stakeholders were also provided with functionalities on websites and email addresses to

reach out to the organisation. This approach enabled active listening and understanding of the stakeholders' specific needs, fostering an open and accessible image. The significance for sport marketing lies in the importance of this two-way communication in building long-term relationships with stakeholders, ultimately encouraging their continued engagement. Including interactive communication in a digital marketing framework will facilitate relationship building, which is key to success over the long term.

Sport organisations prioritise regular *engagement with stakeholders* through various communication channels, such as social media, newsletters, emails and traditional media (see paragraph 5.2.1.2). Some of them also implemented a CRM system and app, which showed some commitment to investing money in building relationships. There were continuous engagement activities throughout the event cycle to build anticipation and foster loyalty. Social media and websites were identified as crucial channels for involving stakeholders in event co-creation and seeking their opinions. This approach is well supported by the literature, in which the importance of two-way communication in building relationships with stakeholders is emphasised (see paragraph 3.2). However, it was a challenge to get stakeholder participation in the co-creation of events and seeking their opinions; thus, communication, although not intentional, was mostly one-way (see paragraph 5.2.1.1). This highlights the necessity for more efficient tactics to promote interactive participation, which is crucial for achieving success in digital sport marketing. This insight indicates a chance for sports organisations to reevaluate and rethink their methods of communication in order to promote more interactive conversations. This can be done by utilising digital tools and platforms that encourage feedback and involvement from all parties involved. It is essential to address this gap in order to establish a cooperative atmosphere that appreciates the input of stakeholders, improves the sense of community, and ultimately strengthens relationships. This is a significant goal within the context of digital sport marketing.

There is a significant lack of standardisation in how sport organisations define an *end-to-end experience*. Most of the sport marketers believed they provided such an experience; however, their interpretations of what it entails differed significantly. Some respondents felt that the end-to-end experience should extend beyond the day of the event or match, highlighting challenges in delivering a consistent and comprehensive experience at various stages – before, during and after an event. Furthermore, while they identified specific contact points and tailored content to them, there was uncertainty about how these points of contact were systematically integrated into their overall marketing strategies. This discrepancy highlights the necessity for a more explicit and cohesive understanding of what defines a complete end-to-end experience in the field of sport marketing. The variance in interpretations highlights the need to establish a *consistent* framework for defining the comprehensive scope of an end-to-end experience, particularly in

relation to the pre-event, event, and post-event stages. It also indicates the necessity for comprehensive strategies that not only focus on the event day, but also include the entire lifespan of stakeholder interaction, guaranteeing consistency and a smooth experience. The lack of certainty regarding the systematic incorporation of contact points into comprehensive marketing strategies indicates the need for more advanced integration techniques within digital marketing frameworks. This would assist sport organisations in ensuring that every interaction point is effectively contributing to a unified marketing storyline.

The utilisation of post-event surveys and social media as feedback mechanisms underscores the significance of continuous communication, which is crucial for comprehending stakeholder requirements and fostering enduring relationships. Despite the efforts of sport organisations to include stakeholders in event planning and decision-making, the difficulty in getting them to actively participate indicates the need for more creative and efficient engagement strategies within the digital marketing framework.

Dedication to fostering relationships is apparent through the utilisation of diverse communication channels and customer relationship management (CRM) systems, which constitute essential elements of an effective digital marketing strategy in the sports industry.

Given these results, developing a framework for sport marketers should incorporate actions that prioritise relationship building namely interactive communication, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder end-to-end experience.

8.4.2 Managing Digital Marketing

The main components of the digital marketing strategy for the identified event and team sport organisations included *situation analysis*, objectives, strategy, tactics, action and control. The interviewees demonstrated a good understanding of their target market and stakeholders, conducting proper research on their environment, market position, competition and stakeholders.

The primary *objective* for the sport marketers was to attract and retain stakeholders, while growing their brand and achieving a strong presence in the market. The main *strategy* involved providing relevant and engaging content to create awareness and interest, supported by email marketing, SEO marketing and social media marketing.

The sport marketers also used various *tactics* in their marketing strategy, such as creating interactions through social media, display advertisements, email marketing campaigns and live information sessions. However, while they used a diverse range of tactics, they faced the operational challenge of having small digital marketing teams, which, in some cases, necessitated

outsourcing the work. Consequently, strategies are proposed for enhancing the efficiency of digital marketing teams in sport organisations, either by expanding and *training* internal teams, or by identifying specific areas where outsourcing can offer strategic benefits. *Resource planning* is, thus, important to effectively execute multi-channel digital marketing tactics. It is essential to address this operational aspect in order to enable sport organisations to effectively utilise their digital marketing strategies and ensure strong engagement with their stakeholders.

Mention was made in the literature about relying too much on digital channels and tactics, without considering offline or traditional marketing methods. The sport marketers still maintained a good relationship with traditional media in that their events and matches were, in most cases, being broadcast live and they strove for a balanced mix of online and offline marketing approaches to ensure a wide reach and engagement with diverse stakeholders. Moreover, measuring the effectiveness and impact of their digital marketing efforts was challenging because they made use of traditional post-event surveys and impact studies, which is costly. This signifies the need to investigate and incorporate advanced data analysis and digital measurement tools into the sport marketing framework. These tools enable sport organisations to quickly adjust their strategies using accurate *data-driven insights*, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of their marketing efforts. Moreover, it indicates a chance for sport marketers to innovate their methods of gathering and analysing data, transitioning towards more enduring and perceptive techniques for assessing their digital marketing environment. It is crucial to consider these factors in order to create a strong digital sport marketing strategy that is effective and quantifiable.

In summary, sport organisations' management of their digital marketing includes a thorough analysis of the current situation, well-defined objectives, strategic delivery of content, and the use of multiple channels to cater to the needs of target markets and stakeholders. They utilise social media, search engine optimisation (SEO), and email marketing to attract and retain stakeholders through compelling content and a robust online presence. Implementing strategic resource planning and outsourcing can enhance the execution of digital marketing by effectively tackling operational challenges such as limitations in team size. It is crucial to maintain a balance between online and traditional media engagement in order to effectively engage stakeholders. This highlights the significance of utilising advanced data analysis tools to make strategic adjustments and assess the impact. The study highlights the importance of combining digital and traditional marketing techniques with advanced data analysis to develop a quantifiable and efficient digital sport marketing strategy that tackles operational challenges and involves stakeholders.

To conclude this section on managing digital marketing, the significance for sport marketing lies, therefore, in the effective management of the digital marketing strategy to attract, engage and

retain stakeholders while measuring campaign success and making informed decisions for future adjustments.

8.4.3 The channels and functionalities of digital marketing

The sport marketers believed that the website was essential for providing information about their organisation, events and matches. In addition, they developed apps to deliver the same information that was available on their websites. Email marketing played a significant role, with electronic newsletters being the most popular form of communication (see paragraph 5.2.3). Some sport marketers also used a CRM system to enhance their personalised email communication with stakeholders. SEO was not a significant focus for well-known sport organisations, which might pose challenges in terms of attracting international athletes. Display and online advertising were not explicitly mentioned. It was indicated in the quantitative analysis that the stakeholders rarely interacted with online advertising (see Table 7.11). It could, thus, be worth investigating whether it would be a cost-effective approach.

Social media channels, particularly Facebook and Instagram, were deemed necessary for interaction, and engagement with stakeholders. Facebook was targeted more at middle-aged and older stakeholders, while Instagram played a significant role in reaching a younger audience. This was also demonstrated in the content analysis and quantitative survey (see paragraph 6.2.1 and table 7.3). The popularity of Instagram Reels and video content was on the rise, and some organisations also integrated their content on TikTok. However, capacity was a challenge and video content, especially, was outsourced, which had budget implications.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media engagement increased because the organisations used it to keep the stakeholders connected to the sport, offering a sense of hope. The challenge for them was to come up with innovative ways to present the content. To this end, they leveraged social media to post training scenes, interviews and profiles of participants and players, highlights of events and games, and behind-the-scenes content to maintain stakeholder engagement.

Overall, websites and social media channels were identified by the sport marketers as essential to facilitate effective communication, engagement and distribution of content to stakeholders. The functionalities of digital marketing discussed in this section could be referred to as a *digital communication toolkit* to suggest a collection of strategies and methods that can be employed in the digital marketing context. Figure 8.3 provides an illustration of the sport organisation's digital marketing strategies derived from the semi-structured interviews.



Figure 8-3: Sport organisation's digital marketing strategies derived from the semi-structured interviews

The findings depict a unique approach to the digital marketing strategy for sport, i.e., one set apart from generic marketing approaches. The focus on fostering relationships through interactive communication platforms, such as social media and post-event surveys, is specifically tailored to meet the emotionally charged and community-oriented characteristics of the sport community. Engagement activities and co-creation not only enhance loyalty but also empower stakeholders as active participants in the sport narrative – a characteristic that is less prominent in non-sport sectors. The creation of a consistent and complete experience from start to finish demonstrates the recurring involvement that is inherent in sport. This includes the excitement leading up to an event and the evaluation afterwards, resulting in a comprehensive journey that is different from the usual straightforward interaction found in other industries. From a management perspective, the fundamental elements and strategies for content channels are adjusted to find a balance between the fast-paced and ever-changing nature of sport and the requirement for careful planning and operational effectiveness. The integration of efficient resource allocation and specialised measurement and analytics designed for sport demonstrates a regard for the distinct pace and performance indicators within the sports industry, which are frequently influenced by immediate occurrences and seasonal patterns. These sport-specific practices emphasise distinct relationship dynamics, expectations for engagement, and the incorporation of traditional sporting values into the digital marketing field, distinguishing them from more general digital marketing approaches.

The emphasis on building relationships with stakeholders through the effective management of a digital marketing strategy and using the functionalities of digital marketing underlines the comprehensive nature of digital marketing. Including these components in a digital marketing framework will ensure a holistic and integrated strategy for sport marketers to effectively engage with stakeholders and achieve their marketing objectives.

8.5 SPORT ORGANISATION'S USE OF THE FUNCTIONALITIES OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

A qualitative content analysis was conducted to examine the use of the functionalities of digital marketing in building relationships. The analysis was based on theoretical themes that were previously identified in Chapter 3 of the literature review, namely the concept of digital integration and the constructs of user engagement, content creation, community nurturing and traffic generation. The data obtained from the analysis was subjected to a careful and systematic content analysis process that was both confirmable and qualitatively sound (see paragraph 4.6.2.3). This approach ensured that the fourth research question was answered, namely: *How do sport organisations utilise the functionalities of digital marketing to build relationships with sport stakeholders?* (See paragraph 1.4.4).

Digital integration of the functionalities of digital marketing is important for a digital marketing framework because it allows sport marketers to carry out tasks that are essential for reaching, engaging and converting their target audience. The functionalities will provide for a consistent digital experience to build lasting relationships with stakeholders.

8.5.1 Digital integration

Sport organisations utilise websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts to build relationships with stakeholders by fostering deep forms of user engagement beyond likes, encouraging persuasive content in UGC. Encouraging meaningful interactions such as comments, shares, clicks on links and participation in polls or competitions fosters strong stakeholder relationships and actively encourages dialogue with stakeholders.

The content is informative, entertaining and inspiring (see paragraph 6.2.1.2) across websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts. Content creation is strategic and repackaged for different channels to enhance the user experience. Providing valuable information to both first-time and returning visitors and encouraging participation creates an end-to-end CX.

Sport organisations foster a sense of community by acknowledging positive feedback, encouraging open dialogue and cultivating a strong sense of belonging and loyalty. Strategies

such as providing entry information in advance and engaging with comments nurture a supportive community, allow for *community-driven engagement*, which enhances brand loyalty, and drive higher participation and support from fans and stakeholders.

Efforts are directed towards generating relevant traffic to websites and social media channels by sharing engaging content to attract visitors and create traffic. There is a strong focus on *conversion-focused traffic generation*, targeting visitors who are likely to engage further with the organisation, which could lead to meaningful conversions. Balancing quantity with quality is crucial to ensure the right audience is reached. Figure 8.4 depicts applying the approach of incorporating digital functionalities as derived from the content analysis on sport organisation's websites, Facebook pages and Instagram accounts.

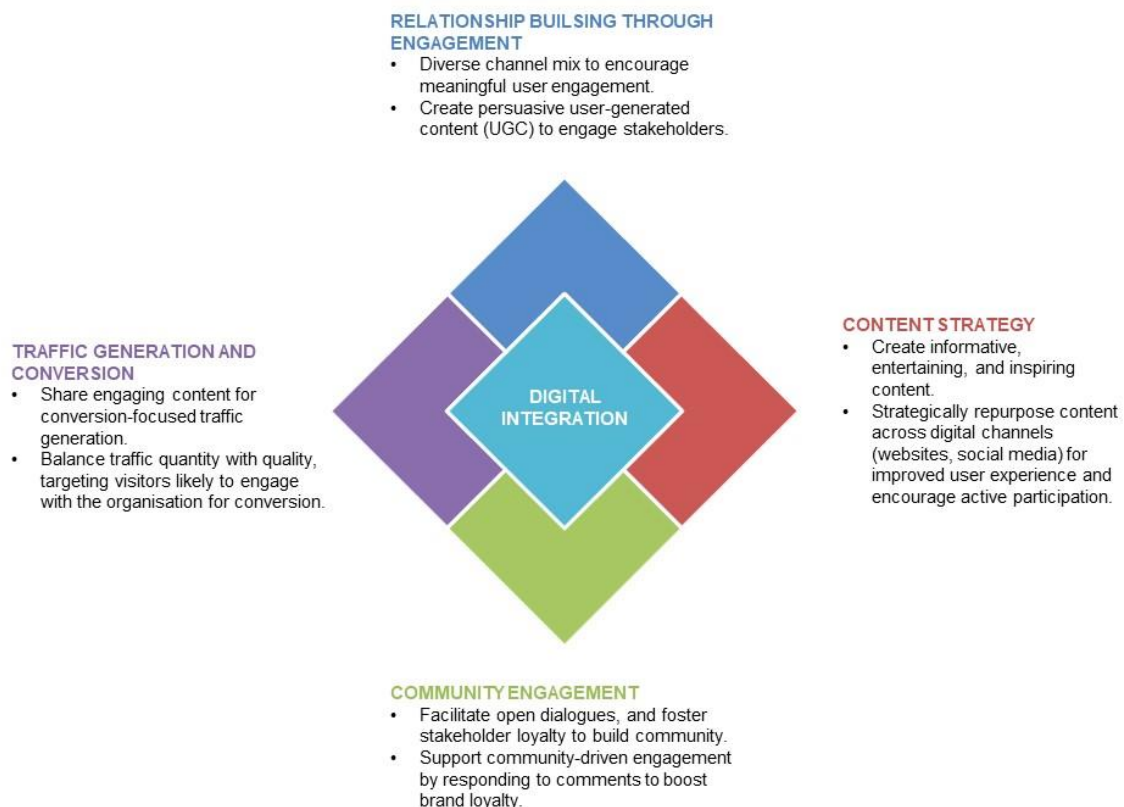


Figure 8-4: Functionalities of digital marketing derived from content analysis

Figure 8.4 illustrates a sport-specific strategy for incorporating digital platforms that emphasises the interactive and communal nature that is unique to sport marketing. The distinguishing factor of these findings is the focused effort on establishing a dynamic ecosystem for engaging stakeholders through diverse digital touchpoints. In the realm of sport, there is a deliberate

emphasis on creating narratives that deeply connect with the passion of sport stakeholders. This not only involves generating content, but also fostering user-generated content that contributes to the collective spirit of the sporting community. In contrast with industries where digital marketing focuses on driving direct sales or optimising click-through rates, sport digital marketing aims to cultivate a sense of community and a collective experience by capitalising on the emotional bond that fans have with teams and athletes. This approach guarantees that traffic generation and conversion strategies in sport not only draw in a large number of people but also captivate their emotions, striking a balance between the quantitative aspects of marketing and the qualitative, emotional experiences that are fundamental to engaging sport stakeholders. The incorporation of these aspects via digital platforms perfectly correlates with the passion-driven environment of the sport industry, making these discoveries highly relevant, as they specifically target the unique, loyalty-driven relationships inherent in the sport community.

In summary, and to answer the fourth research question, sport marketers utilise the functionalities of digital marketing channels to encourage persuasive content to foster stronger stakeholder relationships. Strategic content creation enhances the user experience and community-driven engagement cultivates a sense of belonging. A conversion-focused traffic generation approach allows for a broader reach, ensuring visibility and awareness. These components are key to the development of a framework for digital sport marketing.

8.6 PERCEPTIONS OF SPORT STAKEHOLDERS ON SPORT ORGANISATION'S DIGITAL MARKETING

An electronic survey was utilised for this part of the study to examine sport stakeholders' perceptions of the digital marketing strategies of sport organisations and to answer the fifth research question: What are the sport stakeholders' perceptions of sport organisation's digital marketing? (see paragraph 1.4.5).

Stakeholders' perceptions are important for evaluating the efficacy of existing digital marketing efforts in the realm of sport. Through this approach, valuable data was gathered that guided the formulation and refinement of a digital marketing framework.

8.6.1 Perceptions of relationship building

The sport stakeholders prioritised interactive content that was informative, entertaining and inspiring (see paragraph 6.2.1.2), an easy-to-navigate user interface, a "contact us" section, social media engagement and a photo gallery. These features contribute to a positive user experience

and enhance stakeholder engagement, as confirmed in the literature, the semi-structured interviews and content analysis.

The sport stakeholders also indicated the importance of trust, transparency and clear communication in stakeholder engagement when they were looking for information on the internet and that the sport organisation's website was their primary source of information. They were, however, sceptical about information on websites. This assertion underscores the utmost significance of establishing trust with stakeholders by means of transparent, precise, and secure digital interactions. It is essential to ensure that the content on websites is both engaging and reliable, supported by credible sources. It becomes essential for sport organisations to put in place verification measures, such as transparent sourcing, fact-checking, and providing contact information for follow-up, in order to improve the perceived authenticity and reliability of their digital content. Resolving uncertainties regarding privacy and data security can enhance stakeholder confidence in digital platforms. This entails transparent communication regarding data utilisation policies, implementing strong security measures, and guaranteeing adherence to privacy regulations such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). Improving the stakeholder experience on websites by making them more user-friendly, accessible, and engaging can reduce scepticism, by making stakeholders feel more at ease and appreciated.

Sport stakeholders have varying emotions about video advertisements, including curiosity, irritation and privacy concerns. Stakeholders, especially in older age groups, prefer to watch sport on TV and are most likely to watch the entire event, as well as highlights on social media. The inclination of elderly individuals to watch sport events on television or utilise other technological means rather than attending live events is significant to this study, particularly in relation to the formulation of effective digital sport marketing strategies. This trend highlights the significance of customising digital marketing strategies to meet the varied preferences of the sport stakeholder demographic. Marketers should recognise that older stakeholders tend to value convenience and comfort and, therefore, prefer accessing content digitally rather than attending events in person. This implies a necessity to allocate more resources towards improving the quality and availability of broadcasts, as well as creating additional digital content that enhances the remote viewing experience.

Furthermore, this inclination suggests the necessity of broadening the scope and involvement of sport content via digital platforms that are preferred by older age groups, such as social media highlights and on-demand services. It emphasises the significance of developing captivating, user-friendly digital advertisements and promotions, i.e., relevant content that connects with an older demographic, guaranteeing that marketing messages are efficiently conveyed through the

platforms they frequently use. Acknowledging and addressing these preferences can assist sport organisations and marketers in optimising engagement, loyalty, and revenue generation across all age demographics, guaranteeing a comprehensive and inclusive digital sport marketing strategy.

It is crucial to comprehend the emotional responses of stakeholders to different touchpoints to ensure a positive end-to-end stakeholder experience. Some of these touchpoints include transparent sourcing, fact-checking, contact information, data security, stakeholder demographic, convenience and comfort, and remote viewing experiences. Furthermore, listening to feedback, acknowledging preferences and offering options for stakeholders will contribute to personalisation and engagement.

8.6.2 Perceptions of digital marketing management

The sport stakeholders viewed WhatsApp, websites, social media and email marketing as being effective. Email marketing, social media advertising and website marketing are the most effective digital marketing channels, according to the stakeholders. A strategic focus on these channels could improve engagement and increase the effectiveness of sport organisation's digital marketing efforts. Sport stakeholders also value brands that take a stand for a good cause.

Stakeholders value brand integrity, which is generally established through brand trustworthiness, ethics, transparency and authenticity, and the ability to engage with the brand. Other important factors include the brand's noble promise, its stance on social issues, and soliciting the opinion of stakeholders. The functionality of digital marketing is generally considered effective in the marketing of sport or through sport. However, stakeholders hold various opinions and preferences regarding the effectiveness of other marketing channels or strategies. This diversity highlights the intricate nature of involving stakeholders, and the need for a versatile, tailored marketing strategy that caters to the diverse range of stakeholder requirements and expectations. Recognising the varied preferences among stakeholders emphasises the need for personalised and customised marketing strategies. It suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective, and that marketing efforts should be tailored to match the specific interests, behaviours, and media consumption habits of different stakeholder groups.

Additionally, it emphasises the significance of expanding marketing channels and strategies. Sport organisations ought not to depend exclusively on a single marketing channel, but rather incorporate a combination of conventional and digital marketing strategies to effectively reach and engage their diverse audience. The focus should be on diversification. Furthermore, recognising stakeholder preferences requires the utilisation of data analytics to collect insights on stakeholder

behaviours and preferences. By utilising a data-driven approach, marketers are able to make well-informed decisions regarding the most effective channels and strategies for various segments of their audience.

Interestingly, they regard the pricing of products as unimportant. This viewpoint challenges the traditional marketing belief that pricing is a crucial factor in influencing consumer behaviour and decision-making. It implies that, in the realm of sport, factors like brand loyalty, quality of the sporting experience, emotional attachment, and the value added through digital enhancements may be more significant than pricing when it comes to stakeholders' involvement and purchasing choices. Marketers should prioritise the delivery of distinctive value and experiences provided by their sport entity, emphasising elements such as exclusive content, immersive experiences, community engagement, and emotional attachments to the team or sport. Sport organisations can utilise storytelling, heritage, and engagement initiatives to strengthen emotional connections with their stakeholders, prioritising these efforts over pricing considerations. Stakeholders seem to more highly regard factors other than price, focusing on the quality and depth of the experience provided. This implies that allocating resources to improve the overall experience for stakeholders, whether through digital platforms or physical events, may be more important than implementing competitive pricing strategies in order to attract and retain stakeholders. Customising marketing messages and experiences can further maximise the value of what stakeholders consider significant. The limited significance of pricing for stakeholders presents sport organisations with opportunities to investigate inventive revenue models that surpass conventional ticket sales and merchandise pricing. Examples of such offerings could include membership programmes, premium content subscriptions, or enhanced digital experiences that provide additional value.

These findings indicate that brand integrity, stakeholder involvement, personalisation and customisation, media consumption habits, diversification, data-driven approaches, the sphere of engagement, channel selection, and content creation are all crucial elements of digital marketing management.

8.6.3 Perceptions of the functionalities of digital marketing

In contrast to other sectors where digital marketing primarily aims to generate sales or increase website traffic, sport digital marketing is centred around enhancing the stakeholder experience by fostering trust and promoting shared values, thereby establishing connections that go beyond mere transactions. Sport stakeholders are generally satisfied with the information portrayed on the sport organisation's websites, which indicates that they are likely to spend more time on the site, revisit it in the future and even recommend it to others. This shows that a well-designed and

informative website could lead to increased website traffic, higher engagement with the organisation's content and improved conversions and revenue.

Sport organisations are most active on Facebook, followed by Instagram and YouTube, which is more suitable for visual and video content. X (Twitter) is less popular. It seems that TikTok, which is a newer channel and more focused on shortform videos, is not yet fully used by sport organisations. This trend highlights how important it is to examine the efficacy of multimedia platforms in involving stakeholders. It also suggests a potential opportunity for growth by embracing newer, short-form video platforms such as TikTok to take advantage of evolving consumer content consumption habits.

There is also a small difference between men and women when it comes to the stakeholder experience and current strategies seem to resonate more with women. Men, it appears, also prefer different formats, channels and content types than women. Affordability and value for money are more important aspects for men. The variations in preferences and experiences between males and females indicate that sport organisations should take into account gender segmentation when devising their marketing strategies. Organisations can enhance engagement and improve the overall stakeholder experience by customising content, formats, and channels to better align with the unique preferences of men and women. The differences also underline the significance of personalisation and customisation in the realm of digital sport marketing. Marketing strategies that take into consideration these gender-specific preferences can result in more efficient communication, greater satisfaction, and enhanced loyalty among male and female stakeholders. The emphasis on affordability and value for money among men indicates that pricing strategies and value propositions may need to be adjusted to appeal more effectively to different gender segments. Understanding what constitutes value for each segment can guide sport organisations in crafting offers that resonate and meet the unique needs of their diverse audience. Given the preference for different content types and channels between genders, sport marketers should diversify their content strategy to cater to these preferences. This may require adjusting the composition of content on different platforms to ensure that it aligns with the specific interests and behaviours of men and women respectively. The diverse preferences between men and women call for a more inclusive marketing approach that acknowledges and respects these differences within sport. By fostering an environment where all stakeholders feel understood and valued, sport organisations can build stronger, more inclusive communities around their brand.

As indicated in paragraph 8.6.1, there appears to be an association between age and the digital sport experience. Contrary to the common assumption that older individuals might shy away from digital technology, the research findings revealed that, when it comes to sport, they do embrace

digital technology, particularly for viewing sport on television rather than attending live events. This suggests that older stakeholders are indeed engaging with digital platforms, albeit through more traditional digital means like television, highlighting the need for tailored marketing strategies that cater to the digital preferences across different age groups. Younger participants are more inclined to seek event-related information on digital channels and rely on online communities.

Audio-based content is not popular on digital channels, but is generally more trusted by stakeholders. On the other hand, text-based content and direct messaging are preferred content formats trusted by stakeholders. The contrast between the two underscores the intricate nature of developing successful digital sport marketing strategies that not only capture the interest of stakeholders, but also establish and maintain trust. A valuable opportunity to combine reliable and preferred content formats in order to create marketing communications that are both captivating and trustworthy is apparent. A deep understanding of stakeholder preferences and the importance of trustworthiness in digital communications is crucial for optimising content strategies and enhancing the effectiveness of digital sport marketing.

.Figure 8.5 provides a schematic representation of the perceptions of sport stakeholders on sport organisation's digital marketing. These outcomes are consistent with the existing literature on digital marketing strategies, as well as the insights obtained from the electronic survey.

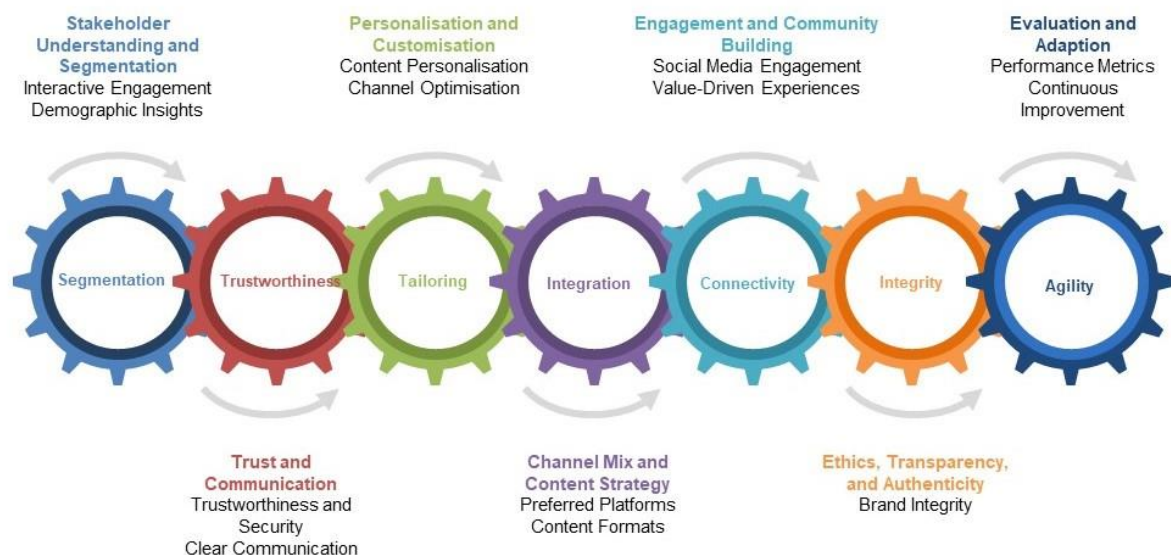


Figure 8-5: Perceptions of sport stakeholders on sport organisation's digital marketing derived from electronic survey.

When examining perceptions about relationship building, digital marketing management, and functionalities, certain key factors become apparent. These factors place a strong emphasis on *interactive content, user-friendly navigation, active involvement on social media, and the importance of trust, transparency, and clear communication in engaging stakeholders*. For the digital marketing framework, it is crucial to recognise the importance of trustworthiness, ethics, transparency, authenticity, and engagement in order to meet the expectations of stakeholders. This means that they need to embrace a *variety of marketing channels* and tailor their strategies to cater to the unique preferences of their stakeholders, taking into account factors such as gender and age groups, which suggests *gender segmentation*. Even with doubts about the accuracy of website information, stakeholders continue to depend on them, which shows the significance of user-friendly and secure digital platforms, pointing to *data security*. Understanding the preferences of older individuals for digital platforms over live events, as well as their diverse trust and content format preferences, highlights the importance of taking a multifaceted approach in digital sport marketing through *generational grouping*. This involves combining trusted and preferred content formats to effectively engage a particular demographic. Furthermore, the extensive use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and the untapped potential of TikTok, present a valuable opportunity for sport organisations to embrace *multimedia platforms*. This allows them to cater to the changing content consumption habits of consumers, ensuring that their marketing strategies are inclusive, engaging, and effectively meet the diverse needs of their stakeholders.

These findings are significant for sport because they highlight the distinctive characteristics of the sport market – an audience that is highly interactive and engaged, demands personalised content and experiences, and places importance on a sense of community and belonging. In contrast with other sectors where digital marketing primarily aims to generate sales or increase website traffic, sport digital marketing is centred around enhancing the stakeholder experience by fostering trust and promoting shared values, thereby establishing connections that go beyond mere transactions. The methodology involves understanding and categorising stakeholders for focused communication, tailoring and adapting content to suit individual preferences, and fostering community development through social media platforms that improve communication. The findings also emphasise the significance of upholding brand integrity and authenticity, particularly in sport where stakeholders have a deep emotional attachment to the teams and athletes they endorse. Moreover, the ability to modify strategies according to performance metrics and ongoing enhancement is evident of the dynamic and outcome-driven nature of the sport industry. The various aspects of digital marketing practices are intricately integrated into the very essence of

the sport community, distinguishing them from practices in sectors where emotional engagement may not be as prominent.

A comprehensive digital marketing framework specifically tailored for the sport industry is devised by combining the literature review (see paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3) and empirical findings (see paragraphs 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6). The literature emphasises the significance of establishing relationships, prioritising stakeholders, and being adaptable in response to changing technologies and market conditions, such as those caused by COVID-19. The framework is enhanced by empirical findings obtained from semi-structured interviews, content analyses and an electronic survey. These findings provide practical insights into how stakeholders interact with digital content and platforms. Collectively, they contribute to the development of a flexible framework that combines conventional and digital marketing tactics, emphasises the importance of tailored and community-oriented content, and utilises data analysis for informed decision-making. This integrated approach guarantees that the digital marketing framework is based on both the scholarly comprehension and the practical encounters of sport stakeholders, ensuring relevance, effectiveness, and the ability to cultivate strong and enduring connections in the digital age of sport marketing.

8.7 A DIGITAL MARKETING FRAMEWORK FOR SPORT ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

The general research question posed was as follows: *Which concepts should a digital marketing framework consist of to address the specific challenges faced by sport marketers in South Africa?*

To answer the general research question of identifying the essential concepts for a digital marketing framework that addresses the specific challenges of sport marketers in South Africa, the study will draw from the synthesised insights of the literature review and empirical findings. These points of departure will guide the construction of a digital framework tailored to the distinctive needs and dynamics of the South African sport marketing landscape.

8.7.1 Points of departure for the digital sport marketing framework

The framework will be developed based on the outlined points of departure, which include the growth and management of South African sport, an understanding of stakeholder dynamics, the shift towards digital engagement, and the development of a complete strategy for digital marketing.

- **Sport Growth and Governance in South Africa**
 - Sport in South Africa experiences significant growth.

- Strong governance oversees a multifaceted industry comprising government, non-profit, and corporate sectors.
- These sectors traditionally rely on conventional marketing strategies.
- Adjustments are needed to address the unique challenges of sport marketing.
- **Understanding Stakeholder Dynamics**
 - Stakeholders exhibit emotional commitment due to the unpredictable nature of sport.
 - Diverse backgrounds and levels of involvement among stakeholders need acknowledgment.
 - The communal nature of sport consumption fosters a sense of community.
 - Marketing strategies must extend beyond logos to encompass all aspects of team identity.
- **Transition to Digital Engagement**
 - Stakeholders play a role in shaping the digital narrative.
 - Data-driven, focused marketing strategies are essential in a saturated content environment.
 - The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital engagement.
 - Virtual interactions become common, with increased focus on community well-being.
- **Development of Digital Marketing Framework**
 - Consideration of stakeholder needs is paramount.
 - The framework should surpass traditional methods, focusing on interactive communication and end-to-end stakeholder experience.
 - Leverage emotional and communal elements of sport to engage stakeholders actively.
 - Customised, educational, and captivating content is crucial for various stakeholder groups.
 - Thorough planning, including content scheduling and digital platform utilisation, is necessary.
 - Incorporation of metrics and analytics enables experience customisation based on stakeholder interests.
 - Emphasis on community nurturing reflects the power of sport to unite people.

Thus, a practical and interdependent framework embodies the specific complexities of the sport industry and seeks to establish deeper and enduring connections through the use of digital marketing.

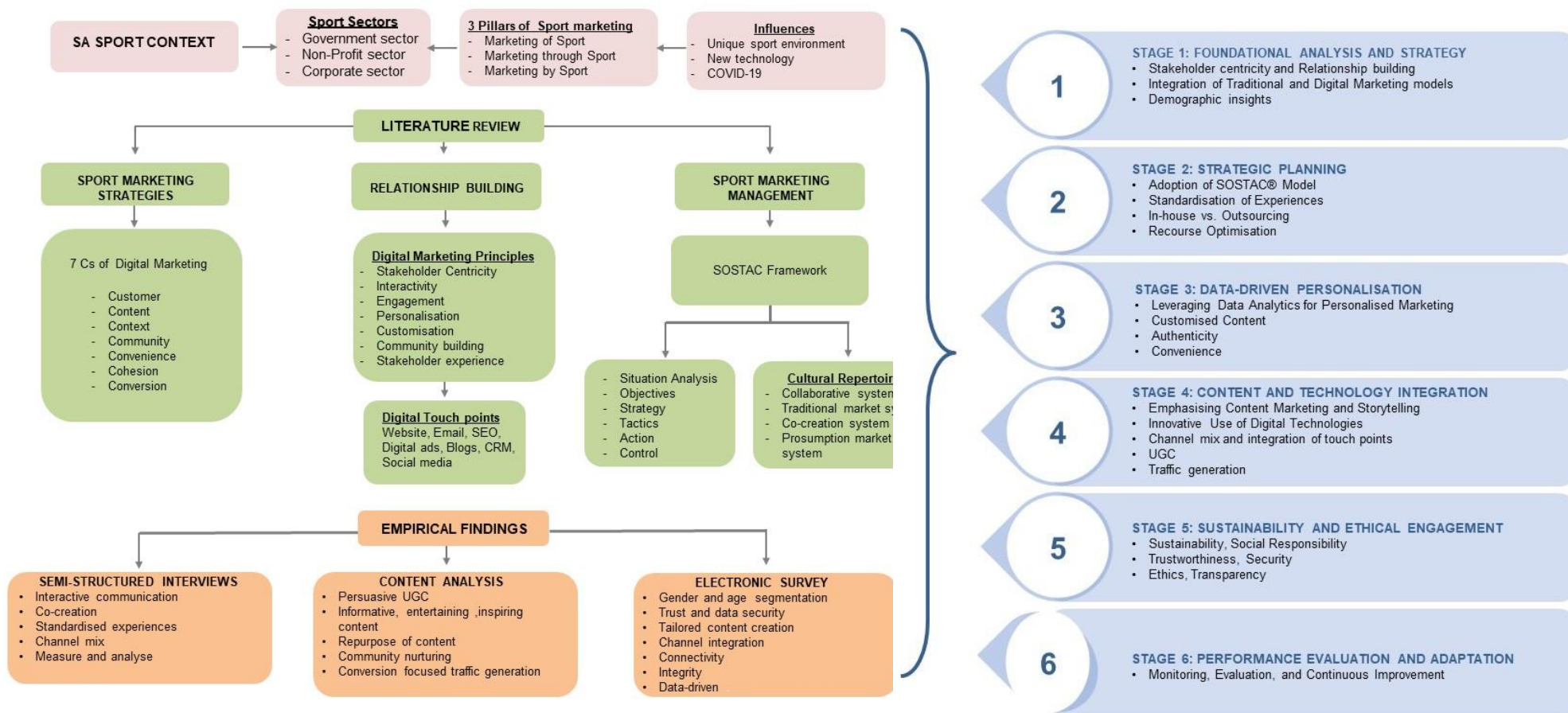


Figure 8-6: Digital marketing framework for sport organisations in South Africa

Stage 1: Foundational Analysis and Strategy in the context of sport

- Create a sport-focused communication plan that aims to strengthen connections with fans and athletes by actively engaging and seeking feedback to create customised sport experiences. This plan aims to set clear goals for creating regular and significant engagement on digital platforms such as team apps and fan pages. It ensures that the content and campaigns align with and accurately portray stakeholders' enthusiasm and the sport culture, ultimately strengthening stakeholder loyalty.
- Employ digital platforms to enhance interactive communication, validating the significance and commitment of stakeholders to the sport. By incorporating a combination of team websites, forums, social media platforms, and focused email campaigns, organisations can cultivate a digital community centred around sport. This encourages continuous dialogue and stakeholder engagement, which is crucial for establishing an active and enthusiastic stakeholder base.
- Integrate traditional sport marketing strategies with digital adaptations to effectively address the distinct challenges of the digital landscape in the sport industry. This entails prioritising value, cost efficiency, convenience, and effective communication. Utilise digital storytelling, encourage stakeholder-driven social media interactions, and implement mobile-friendly initiatives to expand stakeholder engagement, ensuring that sport content is easily accessible, relevant, and valuable to an increasingly digital audience.
- Develop tailored strategies to cater to the unique preferences and behaviours of diverse demographics, encompassing various age groups and genders. To effectively connect with every stakeholder and drive deeper engagement and broader satisfaction, sport organisations should recognise and cater to the diverse stakeholder profiles, ensuring that their marketing strategies offer inclusive experiences.

Stage 2: Strategic Planning in the context of sport

- Applying the SOSTAC® framework and the seven Cs principles: Utilise the SOSTAC® model customised for the sport industry, integrating the seven Cs of digital marketing along with a comprehension of the distinct cultural repertoires of sport to carefully strategize, implement, and evaluate sport digital marketing strategies. A systematic approach is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge in the ever-changing realm of sport, in which stakeholder involvement patterns and digital technologies progress swiftly.
- Developing standardised approaches for enhancing the experiences of sport stakeholders: Create uniform protocols for sport marketing to guarantee a consistent and captivating experience for stakeholders in all digital interactions. The uniformity plays a

crucial role in providing services, ranging from ticket buying to online community involvement, thereby enhancing stakeholder satisfaction and strengthening their relationship with the sport.

- Maximising the utilisation of team resources in the field of sport marketing: Ensure the optimal allocation of marketing resources in a strategic manner, allowing sport organisations to fully utilise their available talents and tools. This entails making well-informed choices regarding the composition and expertise of marketing teams in order to execute impactful campaigns that strongly resonate with sport stakeholders.
- Striking a balance between internal and external expertise in sport: Analyse the benefits and drawbacks of cultivating internal expertise in sport marketing compared to hiring external specialists. This strategic analysis enables sport organisations to effectively control expenses and maximise marketing results by aligning internal capabilities with the necessary flexibility to address the distinct demands and opportunities in the sport industry.

Stage 3: Data-driven Personalisation in sport Marketing

- Implementing data analytics in sports: Employ data analytics tools to capture and analyse stakeholder behaviour, preferences, and engagement across events, merchandise sales, and digital interactions. The strategic utilisation of this data is imperative in sport marketing as it offers a strong, evidence-driven framework to comprehend and forecast stakeholder behaviours, allowing sport organisations to develop focused strategies that deeply resonate with diverse stakeholder demographics.
- Utilising data insights to customise sports marketing strategies: Utilise the knowledge acquired through data analytics to create customised marketing content, messages, and campaigns that are specifically designed to cater to the interests and preferences of various stakeholder segments. This approach is crucial in sport, as it can greatly enhance authenticity and stakeholders' loyalty and involvement through content that resonates with their personal experiences and emotions regarding their favourite teams and athletes. As a result, this maximises the overall impact and reach of sport marketing initiatives.
- Making it convenient for the stakeholder: In this modern, fast-paced era, it is crucial for interactions with the sport organisation to be as convenient as possible. Some examples hereof include efficient online merchandise transactions, user-friendly ticket reservation systems, and websites optimised for mobile devices. All such interactions should be aimed at improving the experience and driving engagement, thereby putting the stakeholder first.

Stage 4: Content and Technology Integration in sport marketing

- Creating a content marketing strategy focused on sport: Create a content marketing strategy that utilises storytelling to establish a stronger emotional bond with sport stakeholders. This strategy aims to enhance loyalty and engagement by emphasising narratives that showcase the personal journeys, victories, and behind-the-scenes moments of athletes and teams. By making the sport more relatable and emotionally resonant, it seeks to foster a stronger connection between stakeholders and the sport.
- Expanding the range of content formats to increase audience engagement: To accommodate the varied preferences of sport stakeholders, it is important to provide a well-rounded combination of audio and visual content, as well as text-based communications and direct messaging. The equilibrium between authenticity and trustworthiness of the content is crucial in order to optimise engagement across various media platforms, thereby amplifying the overall effectiveness of sport marketing endeavours.
- Incorporating cutting-edge digital technologies: Utilise state-of-the-art technologies like augmented reality, virtual events, and gamification to develop interactive and immersive experiences for stakeholder. For instance, the utilisation of virtual tours of stadiums, live-streamed games, and interactive sport games can greatly enhance the stakeholder experience, fostering a stronger sense of connection between stakeholder and their teams and athletes.
- Facilitating the production of user-generated content (UGC) to cultivate a feeling of community and engagement among enthusiasts: This strategy not only bolsters the genuineness of the sport brand but also actively involves stakeholders by providing them with a platform to express their experiences and opinions, thereby fortifying their connection with the sport.
- Striking a balance between the quantity and quality of traffic: This is crucial for optimising sport digital platforms. The objective of strategic content distribution and marketing is to attract committed and devoted stakeholders, with the goal of enhancing the likelihood of significant interactions and conversions, rather than simply boosting visitor counts. This strategy guarantees that marketing resources are efficiently utilised to amplify the extent of stakeholder engagement and loyalty.

Stage 5: Sustainability and ethical engagement in sport marketing

- Integrating sustainability and social responsibility: It is important to integrate these initiatives into the digital marketing strategies of sport organisations to promote

environmental and social consciousness. Aligning with ethical and responsible business practices is crucial to meet the expectations of stakeholders who are increasingly demanding accountability. This will enhance the sport organisation's reputation and strengthen its appeal among environmentally and socially conscious stakeholders.

- Utilising digital platforms to promote ethical involvement: Employ digital platforms to advance environmental conservation, bolster community engagement, and cultivate inclusivity in the realm of sport. These platforms provide a substantial opportunity to expand the reach and influence of these initiatives, fostering an involved and varied community that mirrors the values and expectations of the contemporary sport audience.
- Advocating for moral principles and openness: Highlight the sport brand's dedication to ethical practices, and transparency, using digital communication channels. Sports organisations can cultivate stronger trust and loyalty by actively appreciating and integrating stakeholder opinions and advocating for social causes. By showcasing these commitments, the organisation strengthens the emotional bond with stakeholders and proves that it not only participates in sport but also actively contributes to the advancement of societal values.

Stage 6: Performance Evaluation and Adaptation in sport marketing

- To effectively implement a dynamic monitoring and evaluation system, sport organisations should utilise a versatile system that employs data analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives in relation to predetermined key performance indicators (KPIs). This system is essential for accurately quantifying the effects of campaigns, guaranteeing responsibility and openness, and refining strategies to maximise the return on investment. This system enables sport marketers to validate the effectiveness of their efforts in engaging stakeholders and achieving their intended objectives.
- Utilising insights for strategic agility is vital. Insights obtained from data analytics should be actively employed to consistently improve and optimise marketing strategies. For sport organisations, this entails the ability to promptly adjust to feedback from stakeholders and changes in the sport market. By applying these insights, sport marketers can adapt quickly, making necessary changes to their strategies in real-time. This ensures that their marketing efforts stay in line with stakeholder expectations and market trends, thus maintaining their relevance and optimising the impact of their campaigns.

Figure 8.6 provides a detailed illustration of the six stages of the proposed digital marketing framework specifically designed for the sport industry. This visual representation guides the reader through each strategic phase, from foundational analysis and strategic planning to

performance evaluation and adaptation, showcasing how each stage interconnects to form a comprehensive approach to sports marketing.

Analysing sport marketing from a local perspective is, thus, crucial to ensure that approaches are appropriately tailored to match the complex consumption patterns and preferences that are specific to the South African context.

8.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are some limitations to this study that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the sample size for the semi-structured interviews was relatively small, due to the availability of respondents. The sample, therefore, consisted of a limited number of sport organisations and respondents in South Africa. This might limit the generalisability of the findings to other regions or sports. The utilisation of purposive sampling, although beneficial for thorough investigation, may restrict the generalisability of the results. Concentrating on sport organisations and marketers who are already involved in digital marketing may not accurately represent the experiences or strategies of those who are less involved or at different stages of adopting digital marketing.

The study may fail to consider valuable insights from organisations that are struggling with digital marketing or employing innovative strategies that are not widely recognised or adopted, as it focuses solely on sport organisations that are already successfully implementing digital marketing strategies. Purposive sampling is effective for obtaining detailed insights from a particular group of stakeholders, but it may limit the range of perspectives. This has the potential to disregard emerging trends or perspectives that are not well-represented in the wider sport marketing system.

Secondly, the researcher relied primarily on self-reported data from the sport organisations and stakeholders, which might introduce some level of bias or subjectivity into the data. The study was also conducted during a busy time for sport, which might have influenced the research findings because of seasonal changes in sport organisations' digital marketing campaigns.

Another area that could be a limitation might be the impact of emerging technologies on digital marketing strategies. As technology continues to advance, new channels are being introduced, such as virtual and augmented reality, chatbots and artificial intelligence. Sport marketers will need to stay up to date with these technologies and explore how they can be leveraged to improve their digital marketing strategies.

Although input from sport marketers, analysis of digital channels and the perceptions of the participants, fans and supporters was gathered to compile this framework, it has not yet been implemented in practice. Recommendations for future research can, thus, be made, based on the digital marketing framework and the above-mentioned limitations. The proposed framework could further be explored by being implemented in practice, focusing on alternative organisational structures and the perceptions of external key stakeholders regarding digital marketing strategies.

Future researchers could expand on this study in several ways. They could consider conducting a larger-scale study with a more diverse sample of sport organisations in South Africa, or even across several countries. This could help to better understand how various factors might influence the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in sport.

Future studies could also explore the effectiveness of specific functionalities of digital marketing, such as social media campaigns, display advertising or email marketing to achieve specific objectives. In addition, the role of technology in digital marketing strategies, such as the use of artificial intelligence or virtual reality and how this might impact stakeholder engagement in sport could be considered for further research.

As data privacy and the protection of personal information is enforced by law, future researchers could also explore the ethical implications of digital marketing strategies in sport.

South Africa has a diverse cultural landscape, with 11 official languages and a wide range of ethnic groups. An area of interest could be to research the impact of cultural differences on the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in sport. These cultural differences might affect the way people respond to digital marketing efforts and it is important for sport marketers to understand these differences to tailor their strategies effectively.

Finally, as women's sport, especially in terms of rugby, cricket and soccer, is rapidly evolving, the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in promoting gender equality in sport could be investigated. Digital marketing strategies could be a powerful tool for promoting women's sport and attracting more female participants and fans. Future researchers could explore the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies in achieving these goals.

In conclusion, while this study provided valuable insights into the digital marketing strategies of sport organisations in South Africa, some limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. However, there are many opportunities for future research in this area that could help to further understand how digital marketing strategies can be used to effectively engage sport stakeholders and build strong relationships in South Africa.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., Finch, D., Séguin, B. & Nadeau, J. 2020. The role of social media in the co-creation of value in relationship marketing: a multi-domain study. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 28(6):472-493.
- Aisbett, L. & Hoye, R. 2015. Human resource management practices to support sport event volunteers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 53(3):351-369.
- Allen, D. 2015. *Empire, war & cricket in South Africa: Logan of Matjiesfontein*. Cape Town: Penguin Random House.
- Alsaleh, D. 2017. Understanding the role of blogger recommendations on consumer purchasing behavior. *The Journal of Business Inquiry*, 17(1):23-40.
- American Marketing Association. 2017. *Definition of marketing*. <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/> Date of access: 23 July 2022.
- Angelopulo, G. & Barker, R. 2013. *Integrated organisational communication*. Cape Town: Juta.
- aQuelle Midmar Mile. 2023. *About the charity challenge*. <https://www.midmarmile.co.za/about-the-charity-challenge/> Date of access: 3 March 2023.
- Argyrous, G. 2011. *Statistics for research: with a guide to SPSS*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. 2012. *The practice of social research*. South African ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Baena, V. 2019. Global marketing strategy in professional sport: lessons from FC Bayern Munich. *Soccer & Society*, 20(4):660-674. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2017.1379399>
- Bahtar, A.Z. & Muda, M. 2016. The impact of user-generated content (UGC) on product reviews towards online purchasing: a conceptual framework. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 37:337-342.
- Bakhtieva, E. 2017. B2B digital marketing strategy: a framework for assessing digital touch points and increasing customer loyalty based on Austrian companies from heating, ventilation and air conditioning industry. *Oeconomia Copernicana*, 8(3):463-478.

- Bayer, E., Srinivasan, S., Riedl, E.J. & Skiera, B. 2020. The impact of online display advertising and paid search advertising relative to offline advertising on firm performance and firm value. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 37(4):789-804.
- Beech, J.G. & Chadwick, S. 2013. *The business of sport management*. London: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Benecke, R., Verwey, S. & Phumo, T. 2021. *Strategic communication: South African perspectives*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, A.A. 2018. *Media and communication research methods: an introduction to qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Blasingame, J. 2010. *The power of building customer communities*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimblasingame/2017/05/07/the-power-of-building-customer-communities/?sh=441387e8486c> Date of access: 19 July 2020.
- Bond, C. 2017, 17 December. 27 Google search statistics you should know in 2019 [Blog post].
<https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2019/02/07/google-search-statistics> Date of access: 13 September 2022.
- Boshoff, C. 2014. *Services marketing: a contemporary approach*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta.
- Bouah, L. 2016. *An analysis of the implementation of the National Sport and Recreation Plan in the Western Cape*. Bellville: University of the Western Cape (Thesis – PhD).
<http://hdl.handle.net/11394/4991>
- Brinker, S. 2014. *A new brand of marketing: the 7 meta-trends of modern marketing as a technology-powered discipline* [Blog post]. <https://chiefmartec.com/2014/03/new-brand-marketing-technology/> Date of access: 8 July 2022.
- Burgess, J., Poell, T. & Marwick, A.E. 2017. *The Sage handbook of social media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Busca, L. & Bertandias, L. 2020. A framework for digital marketing research: investigating the four cultural eras of digital marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 49(1):1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2019.08.002>

Business Standard. 2020. *What is bio-secure environment or bio-bubble in cricket?* <https://www.business-standard.com/about/what-is-bio-bubble#collapse> Date of access: 11 April 2021.

Byon, K.K. & Phua, J. 2021. Digital and interactive marketing communications in sport. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(2):75-78. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2021.1970422>

Cape Town Cycle Tour. 2023. *Cape Town cycle tour history*. <https://www.capetowncycletour.com/cape-town-cycle-tour-history/> Date of access: 27 October 2023.

Capegemini Research Institute. 2020. *Emerging technologies in sport: reimagining the fan experience*. <https://www.capgemini.com/gb-en/insights/research-library/tech-in-sport/> Date of access: 10 July 2023.

Chaffey, D. 2022. *Introducing the RACE Growth System and RACE Planning Framework: practical tools to improve your digital marketing*. <https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/race-a-practical-framework-to-improve-your-digital-marketing/> Date of access: 19 December 2022.

Chaffey, D. & Ellis-Chadwick, F. 2016. *Digital marketing: strategy, implementation and practice*. Harlow: Pearson.

Chaffey, D. & Smith, P.R. 2022. *Digital marketing excellence: planning, optimizing and integrating online marketing*. Milton: Taylor & Francis.

Cheesman, A. 2023. *Top sectors within the sport industry*. <https://intelligence.globalsportjobs.com/top-sectors-within-the-sport-industry> Date of access: 27 Aug. 2023.

Christian, O.O., Aghara, V.N.O. & Obianuju, E. 2017. Effect of relationship marketing and relationship marketing programs on customer loyalty. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, 5(5):58-71.

Comrades Marathon. 2023. *Comrades Marathon history*. <https://www.comrades.com/histories> Date of access: 20 October 2023.

Conradie, T.J. 2016. *The development of a recommended digital marketing strategy for Pan Macmillan, South Africa*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University. (Thesis – MBA).

- Cosic, M. & Djuric, M.D. 2010. Relationship marketing in the tourist service sector. *UTMS Journal of Economics*, 1(1):53-60.
- Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J.D. 2017. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Curtis, B. & Curtis, C. 2011. *Social research: a practical introduction*. London: Sage.
- Das, S. & Lall, G. 2016. Traditional marketing vs digital marketing: an analysis. *International Journal of Commerce and Management Research*, 2(8):5-11.
- David, M. & Sutton, C. 2010. *Social research: an introduction*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.
- Deloitte. 2020. *Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on the sport industry*.
<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sport-business-group/topics/sport-business-group.html>
 Date of access: 22 March 2023.
- Dimitrova, P. & Sin, I. 2018. *Digital marketing in start-ups: the role of digital marketing in acquiring and maintaining business relationships*. Växjö, Sweden: Linnaeus University. (Thesis – Bachelor in Business Administration). <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1222813&dswid=-918> Date of access: 14 Apr. 2023.
- Dodson, I. 2016. *The art of digital marketing: the definitive guide to creating strategic, targeted, and measurable online campaigns*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Doran, G.T. 1981. There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review*, 70(11):35-36.
- Du Plooy, G.M. 2009. *Communication research: techniques, methods and applications*. 2nd ed. Cape Town: Juta.
- Dufvenberg, O. 2020, 10 June. *Why engagement is key: from first interaction to second purchase* [Blog post]. <https://apsis.com/blog/why-engagement-key-first-interaction-second-purchase> Date of access: 28 May 2023.
- Dusi Canoe Marathon. 2023. *Dusi Canoe Marathon history*. <https://dusi.co.za/history/> Date of access: 8 January 2023.
- Dutta, M. 2021. *Why is Microsoft Dynamics CRM software important for the sport industry?* <https://ahaapps.com/dynamics-crm-software-for-sport-industry/> Date of access: 17 June 2023.

Dwivedi, Y.K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D.L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., ... Krishen, A.S. 2021. Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59, 102168.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>

Edelman, D. & Singer, M. 2015. *The new consumer decision journey*.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-new-consumer-decision-journey> Date of access: 3 January 2020.

Edwards, R. & Holland, J. 2013. *What is qualitative interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Elo, S., Kääriäinen, M., Kanste, O., Pölkki, T., Utriainen, K. & Kyngäs, H. 2014. Qualitative content analysis: a focus on trustworthiness. *Sage Open*, 4(1), 2158244014522633.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014522633>

Ennis, S. 2020. *Sport marketing: a global approach to theory and practice*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Esfehani, M.H. & Walters, T. 2018. Lost in translation? Cross-language thematic analysis in tourism and hospitality research. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(11):3158-3174.

Etikan, I., Musa, S.A. & Alkassim, R.S. 2016. Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, 5(1):1-4.

Evans, Z.C.T., Gee, S. & Eddy, T. 2022. Building bridges: connecting sport marketing and critical social science research. *Frontiers in Sport and Active Living*, 4, 970445.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2022.970445>

Field, A. 2013. *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*. 4th ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Fischer, K.D. 2019. *Give the fans what they want: a market segmentation approach to sport fans' social media usage*. Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado. (Dissertation - PhD).

Foroughi, B., Nikbin, D., Hyun, S.S. & Iranmanesh, M. 2016. Impact of core product quality on sport fans' emotions and behavioral intentions. *International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(2):110-129.

- Fritz, K., Schoenmueller, V. & Bruhn, M. 2017. Authenticity in branding: exploring antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(2):324-348.
- Gabbert, E. 2023. *What is SEO content? A guide to creating content for SEO* [Blog post]. <https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2012/01/17/seo-content-beginners-guide> Date of access: 30 September. 2023.
- Gaber, H.R. & Wright, L.T. 2014. Fast-food advertising in social media. a case study on Facebook in Egypt. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research*, 9(1):52-63.
- Gachanja, N. 2017. *8 Most popular sport in Africa*. <https://www.africa.com/8-most-popular-sport-in-africa/> Date of access: 4 January 2023.
- Gibson, C. 2018. The most effective digital marketing strategies & approaches: a review of literature. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 8(2):12-16.
- Giomelakis, D., Karypidou, C. & Veglis, A. 2019. SEO inside newsrooms: reports from the field. *Future Internet*, 11(12), 261. <https://doi.org/10.3390/fi11120261>
- Godin, S. 2018. *This is marketing: you can't be seen until you learn to see*. London: Penguin Business.
- Goertzen, M.J. 2017. Introduction to quantitative research and data. *Library Technology Reports*, 53(4):12-18.
- Gray, D.E. 2021. *Doing research in the real world*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Greenwood, M., Kendrick, T., Davies, H. & Gill, F.J. 2017. Hearing voices: comparing two methods for analysis of focus group data. *Applied Nursing Research*, 35:90-93. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apnr.2017.02.024>
- Grönroos, C. 2008. From marketing mix to relationship marketing: towards a paradigm shift in marketing. *Asia-Australia Marketing Journal*, 35(4):12-127.
- Gummerus, J., Liljander, V. & Sihlman, R. 2017. Do ethical social media communities pay off? An exploratory study of the ability of Facebook ethical communities to strengthen consumers' ethical consumption behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 144:449-465. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2830-y>

- Hadiyati, E. 2016. Study of marketing mix and AIDA model to purchasing on line product in Indonesia. *British Journal of Marketing Studies*, 4(7):49-62.
- Haque, A., Momen, A., Sultana, S. & Yasmin, F. 2013. Effectiveness of Facebook towards online brand awareness: a study on Malaysian Facebook users perspective. *Australian Journal of Basic and Applied Sciences*, 7(10):197-203.
- Harvey, K.E. & Sanchez, L.M.P. 2022. Digital demands convergence of strategies, media, and messages: firms mix content, social, and native marketing. In: Information Resources Management Association. *Research anthology on social media advertising and building consumer relationships*. Hershey, PA: Business Science Reference. pp. 257-282.
- Hassan, D. 2018. *Managing sport business: an introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Haughey, D. 2014, 20 December. *A brief history of SMART goals* [Blog post]. <https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/brief-history-of-smart-goals.php> Date of access: 20 August 2023.
- Henning, E., Smit, B. & Van Rensburg, W. 2010. *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Hillebrand, B., Driessen, P.H. & Koll, O. 2015. Stakeholder marketing: theoretical foundations and required capabilities. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43:411-428. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-015-0424-y>
- Hoblos, N., Sandeep, M.S. & Pan, S.L. 2023. Achieving stakeholder alignment in digital transformation: A frame transformation perspective. *Journal of Information Technology*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02683962231219518>
- Hocking, J.E. & McDermott, S.T. 2003. *Communication research*. 3rd ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Holden, R.R. 2010. Face validity. In: Corsini, R.J. & Weiner, I.B. *The Corsini encyclopedia of psychology*, Pt. 2. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Hollebeek, L.D. & Macky, K. 2019. Digital content marketing's role in fostering consumer engagement, trust, and value: framework, fundamental propositions, and implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 45(1):27-41.
- Horwath, R. 2014. *Elevate: the three disciplines of advanced strategic thinking*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Hoye, R., Smith, A.C., Nicholson, M. & Stewart, B. 2015. *Sport management: principles and applications*. 4th ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Hoye, R., Smith, A.C., Nicholson, M. & Stewart, B. 2018. *Sport management: principles and applications*. 5th ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Huiszoon, P., Martinent, G. & Bodet, G. 2016. *Customer engagement in sport: developing a fan-relationship-management-framework*. Paper delivered at the Academy of Marketing Science 19th World Marketing Congress, July 2016, Paris France.

Internet World Stats. 2022. *Internet users statistics for Africa*.

<https://internetworldstats.com/stats1.htm> Date of access: 3 October 2023.

Jacobs, S., De Bosscher, V., Venter, R. & Scheerder. 2019. Country profile: sport in South Africa. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 11(1):175-191.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19406940.2018.1547780>

Jamshed, Y. 2022. A framework for digital technology and marketing research: examining the effects of trust inclination, and information adoption on purchase intentions of commercial business ventures. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Venturing*, 2(1):60-78.

Jeevan, P. 2015. *A study on digital marketing: a case study with special reference to Flipkart*. Paper delivered at National Conference on E-Learning, E business and E Governance, SIMS. Available from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2960044>

Jones, A.T., Malczyk, A. & Beneke, J. 2011. *Internet marketing: a highly practical guide to every aspect of internet marketing*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

<http://hdl.handle.net/11427/4154>

Julien, H. 2008. Content analysis. In: Given, L.M., ed. *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, Vol. 1. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. pp. 120-122.

Jun, S. & Yi, J. 2020. What makes followers loyal? The role of influencer interactivity in building influencer brand equity. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6):803-814.

Kang, K., Lu, J., Guo, L. & Li, W. 2021. The dynamic effect of interactivity on customer engagement behavior through tie strength: evidence from live streaming commerce platforms. *International Journal of Information Management*, 56, 102251.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102251>

- Keim, M. & De Coning, C. 2014. *Sport and development policy in Africa: results of a collaborative study of selected country cases*. Stellenbosch: African Sun Media.
- Kerin, R.A. & Hartley, S.W. 2017. *Marketing*. 13th ed. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- Khajeheian, D. & Mirahmadi, F. 2015. Social media, traditional media and marketing communication of public relations: a study of banking industry. *American Journal of Marketing Research*, 1(2):79-87.
- Kingsnorth, S. 2022. *Digital marketing strategy: an integrated approach to online marketing*. 2nd ed. London: Kogan Page.
- Kirkpatrick, N., Pederson, J. & White, D. 2018. Sport business and marketing collaboration in higher education. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 22:7-13.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.11.002>
- Kluka, D., Goslin, A. & Hsu, N. 2022. *Governance of sport: aspects and insights*. Morgantown, WV: FiT Publishing.
- Kotler, P., Kartajava, H. & Setiawan, I. 2017. *Marketing 4.0: moving from traditional to digital*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Kujala, J., Sachs, S., Leinonen, H., Heikkinen, A. & Laude, D. 2022. Stakeholder engagement: past, present, and future. *Business & Society*, 61(5):1136-1196.
- Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Janakiraman, R., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). From social to sale: The effects of firm-generated content in social media on customer behavior. *Journal of Marketing*, 80, 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.14.0249>
- Kumar, A., Shankar, A., Tiwari, A.K. & Hong, H.J. 2023. Understanding dark side of online community engagement: an innovation resistance theory perspective. *Information Systems and e-Business Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10257-023-00633-3>
- Kumudha, A. & Thilaga, S. 2016. A study on the impact of social media on millennial consumers' decision making process. *International Journal of Informative & Futuristic Research*, 3(8):2910-2917.
- Lamb, C.W., Hair, J.F., McDaniel, C., Boshoff, C., Terblanche, N., Elliott, R. & Klopper, H.B. 2019. *Marketing*. 6th ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Lauterborn, B. 1990. New marketing litany: four Ps passé: C-words take over. *Advertising Age*, 61(41):26.

Leavy, P. 2022. *Research design: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Leedy, P.D. & Ormond, J.E. 2010. *Practical research: planning and design*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Leedy, P.D. & Ormrod, J.E. 2015. *Practical research: planning and design*. 11th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education.

Lemire, J. 2023. *Sport Tech Research Network (STRN) provides framework for evaluating quality of sport technologies*.

<https://www.sportbusinessjournal.com/Journal/Issues/2023/05/29/Technology/strn.aspx> Date of access: 15 October 2023.

Li, Y.J., Hoffman, E. & Zhu, D. 2022. Should firms pay for online brand communities: using lead user theory in analyzing two contrasting cases. *Decision Support Systems*, 155, 113729. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2021.113729>

Liao, J., Chen, J. & Mou, J. 2021. Examining the antecedents of idea contribution in online innovation communities: a perspective of creative self-efficacy. *Technology in Society*, 66, 101644. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2021.101644>

Liu, C., Zhang, Y. & Zhang, J. 2020. The impact of self-congruity and virtual interactivity on online celebrity brand equity and fans' purchase intention. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 29(6):783-801.

Loubere, N. 2017. Questioning transcription: the case for the systematic and reflexive interviewing and reporting (SRIR) method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung = Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(2). <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-18.2.2739>

Louw, W. 2021. *The future of sport in a post-Covid world*. <https://www.iol.co.za/sport/rugby/the-future-of-sport-in-a-post-covid-world-521c0d5f-7456-458d-b1b6-3fa5ef3e1ef2> Date of access: 7 April 2021.

Maechler, N., Neher, K. & Park, R. 2016. *From touchpoints to journeys: seeing the world as customers do*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our->

[insights/from-touchpoints-to-journeys-seeing-the-world-as-customers-do](#) Date of access: 30 December 2019.

Mahoney, D. 2021. *What is user-generated content? The ultimate guide to UGC marketing.* <https://www.nosto.com/blog/what-is-user-generated-content/> Date of access: 18 June 2023.

Makwara, T., Mukarati, B., Makwara, N. & Holdings, A. 2021. Challenges facing Zimbabwe's aviation sector in promoting accessibility of domestic tourist destinations. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(2):888-898. DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS

Malhotra, N.K., Uslay, C. & Bayraktar, A. 2016. *Relationship marketing re-imagined: marketing's inevitable shift from exchanges to value cocreating relationships.* New York, NY: Business Expert Press.

Mandal, P. & Joshi, N. 2017. Understanding digital marketing strategy. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 5(6):5428-5431.

Manoli, A.E. 2018. Sport marketing's past, present and future: an introduction to the special issue on contemporary issues in sport marketing. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 26(1):1-5. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0965254X.2018.1389492>

Marvian, A. 2017. *How being connected in digital era has changed the customer's path?* <https://marketinginasia.com/2017/12/21/connected-digital-era-changed-customers-path/> Date of access: 8 August 2020.

Mattila, M., Yrjölä, M. & Hautamäki, P. 2021. Digital transformation of business-to-business sales: what needs to be unlearned? *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 41(2):113-129.

Mayrhofer, M., Matthes, J., Einwiller, S. & Naderer, B. 2020. User generated content presenting brands on social media increases young adults' purchase intention. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(1):166-186.

McCoy, P. 2017. *9 Stats that will make you want to invest in content marketing.* <https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/articles/stats-invest-content-marketing/> Date of access: 1 December 2019.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P.J. & Liljedahl, M. 2019. Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, 41(9):1002-1006.

- Melling, M. 2020. *The future of live sport – how brands can make an impact with new digital possibilities*. <https://www.warc.com/newsandopinion/opinion/the-future-of-live-sport--how-brands-can-make-an-impact-with-new-digital-possibilities/en-gb/3901> Date of access: 31 March 2023.
- Mello, T.L. 2020. *Usage of Twitter by state-owned enterprises to communicate with customers: a case of Transnet South Africa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town. (Dissertation – MCom). <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/32862>
- Melton, E.N. & MacCharles, J.D. 2021. Examining sport marketing through a rainbow lens. *Sport Management Review*, 24(3):421-438.
- Miller, D. 2012. *The official history of the Olympic Games and the IOC: Athens to London 1894-2012*. London: Transworld Publishers.
- Minardi, P. 2021. *Top digital and social media trends in sport for 2022*. https://www.greenfly.com/blog/thought-leadership/social_media_trends_sport_2022/ Date of access: 18 Aug. 2023.
- Mohajan, H.K. 2018. Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 7(1):23-48.
- Morra, C.N., Fultz, R. & Raut, S.A. 2022. A lesson from the pandemic: utilizing digital tools to support student engagement during instructional assistant-led sessions. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, 23(3), e00143-00122. <https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.00143-22>
- Muijs, D. 2012. Advanced quantitative data analysis. In: Briggs, A.R.J., Coleman, M. & Morrison, M., eds. *Research methods in educational leadership & management*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage. pp. 363-380.
- Mulder, D. 2015. Introduction to integrated communication. In: Mulder, D. & Niemann-Struweg, I., eds. *Strategic integrated communication*. Pretoria: Van Schaik. pp. 1-24.
- Mullin, B.J., Hardy, S. & Sutton, W. 2014. *Sport marketing*. 4th ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Myburgh, V. 2018. *Entertainment and media outlook: 2018 – 2022: an African perspective*. <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/entertainment-and-media-outlook-2018-2022.pdf> Date of access: 12 December.

- Nalbant, K.G. & Aydın, S. 2022. Literature review on the relationship between artificial intelligence technologies with digital sport marketing and sport management. *Indonesian Journal of Sport Management*, 2(2):135-143.
- Naraine, M.L. & Wanless, L. 2020. Going all in on AI: examining the value proposition of and integration challenges with one branch of artificial intelligence in sport management. *Sport Innovation Journal*, 1:49-61. <https://doi.org/10.18060/23898>
- Nauright, J. 2010. *Long run to freedom: sport, cultures and identities in South Africa*. Morgantown: Fitness Information Technology.
- Nedbank Golf Challenge. 2023. *Nedbank golf challenge: in honour of Gary Player, 5-8 December Sun City*. <https://www.nedbankgolfchallenge.com/> Date of access: 29 October 2023.
- Neuman, D. 2014. Qualitative research in educational communications and technology: a brief introduction to principles and procedures. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 26:69-86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-014-9078-x>
- Nichols, G., Knight, C., Mirfin-Boukouris, H., Uri, C., Hogg, E. & Storr, R. 2016. *Motivations of sport volunteers in England: a review for Sport England*. <https://www.sportengland.org/media/10205/motivations-of-sport-volunteers.pdf> Date of access: 13 August 2023.
- Niven, P.R. 2008. *Balanced scorecard: step-by-step for government and nonprofit agencies*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Nobel, S. 2010. *It's time to bury the marketing funnel*. <http://www.iimagineservicedesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Customer-Life-Cycle-Journey.pdf> Date of access: 29 December 2019.
- Nobile, T.H. & Cantoni, L. 2023. Personalisation (In) effectiveness in email marketing. *Digital Business*, 3(2), 100058. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2023.100058>
- Odendaal, A. 2003. *The story of an African game*. Claremont: David Philip.
- Oliver, P. 2010. *Understanding the research process*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Ortiz-Ospina, E. & Roser, M. 2019. *The rise of social media*. <https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media> Date of access: 30 Sep. 2023.

- Panagiota, D. & Vasiliki, N. 2018. *The power of marketing in the industry of sport*. Thessaloniki, Greece: International Hellenic University. (Thesis – MSc in Management).
<https://repository.ihu.edu.gr/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11544/29361/Dimitrakopoulou.Panagiota.Ni.kodimou.Vasiliki.pdf?sequence=1> Date of access: 21 Mar. 2023.
- Parent, M. & O'Brien, D. 2018. Strategy and planning in the context of sport. In: Hassan, D., ed. *Managing sport business: an introduction*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. pp. 206-232.
- Parent, M.M. & Hoyer, R. 2018. The impact of governance principles on sport organisations' governance practices and performance: a systematic review. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 4(1), 1503578. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2018.1503578>
- Patruti-Baltes, L. 2016. Inbound marketing: the most important digital marketing strategy. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series V: Economic Sciences*, 9(58) no. 2:61-68.
- Peruta, A. & Shields, A.B. 2018. Marketing your university on social media: a content analysis of Facebook post types and formats. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 28(2):175-191.
- Phokwane, L.C. 2020. *Factors influencing marketing strategy formulation for small and medium enterprises in Polokwane*. Pretoria: UNISA. (Dissertation – MCom).
- Piñeiro-Otero, T. & Martínez-Rolán, X. 2016. Understanding digital marketing: basics and actions. In: Machado, C. & Davim, J., eds. *MBA: theory and applications of business and management principles*. Cham: Springer. pp. 37-74.
- Pistol, L. & Tõniş, R. 2017. The "7Ps" & "1G" that rule in the digital world the marketing mix. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Business Excellence*, 11(1):759-769.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/picbe-2017-0080>
- PMG (Parliamentary Monitoring Group). 2019. *Report of Ministerial Committee Investigation into SASCO: structure, role and mandate of Department, with Minister*.
<https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/28777/> Date of access: 20 December 2022.
- Prajapati, S. 2023. *What are the 7 Cs of digital marketing*.
<https://medium.com/@DigitalMediaHub/what-are-the-7-cs-of-digital-marketing-4e993d089176>
 Date of access: 23 March 2024.
- Punch, K.F. 2013. *Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Radhika, M., Reddy, P.M.K. & Prasad, V. 2023. A perspective of investment relationship on effects of social media investment outcomes. *Global Business Review*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/09721509231187496>

Raghavendra, G. & Sudhakara, A. 2017. Digital marketing plan: an alternative framework for sport products. *International Research Journal of Management Science & Technology*, 8(5):290-296.

Ramagole, D.A., Janse van Rensburg, D.C., Pillay, L., Viviers, P., Zondi, P. & Patricios, J. 2020. Implications of COVID-19 for resumption of sport in South Africa: a South African Sport Medicine Association (SASMA) position statement. *South African Journal of Sport Medicine*, 32(1):1-6.

Ramsfield, M. 2023. *7 Cs of digital marketing: a comprehensive guide*.

<https://www.digitalfront.org/what-are-the-7-c-s-of-digital-marketing> Date of access: 23 March 2024.

Ratten, V. & Ratten, H. 2011. International sport marketing: practical and future research implications. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 26(8):614-620.

Ratten, V. & Thompson, A.J. 2021. Digital sport marketing. In: Thaichon, P. & Ratten, V., eds. *Developing digital marketing*. Bingley: Emerald. pp. 75-86.

Rayna, T. & Striukova, L. 2021. Involving consumers: the role of digital technologies in promoting 'prosumption' and user innovation. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 12:218-237.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-016-0390-8>

Reddy, G. 2017. *Digital marketing impact on the consumer decision making process in Nike's customer retail operations in South Africa*. Pretoria: University of Pretoria. (Thesis – PhD).

Ritzer, G. 2017. From production and consumption to prosumption: a personal journey and its larger context. In: Keller, M., Halkier, B., Wilska, T-A. & Truninger, M., eds. *Routledge handbook on consumption*. London: Routledge. pp. 83-93.

Rosenthal, G. 2018. *Interpretive social research: an introduction*. Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen.

Rudansky-Kloppers, S. & Strydom, J.W. 2021. *Principles of sport management*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press Southern Africa.

Safko, L. 2012. *The fusion marketing bible: fuse traditional media, social media, and digital media to maximize marketing*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

SAIDS (South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport). 2023 *South African Institute for Drug-Free Sport*. <http://www.drugfreesport.org.za/> Date of access: 10 October 2023.

Salo, J. 2022. Framing the future of research in the digital marketing domain with digital marketing framework. *FAIMA Business & Management Journal*, 2022(special issue):129-140.

SASCOC (South African Sport Confederation and Olympic Committee). 2023. *South African Sport Confederation and Olympic Committee*. <https://www.sascoc.co.za/> Date of access: 15 October 2023.

Sayyad, S., Mohammed, A., Shaga, V., Kumar, A. & Vengatesan, K. 2020. Digital marketing framework strategies through big data. In: Pandian, A., Senjyu, T., Islam, S. & Wang, H., eds. *Proceeding of the International Conference on Computer Networks, Big Data and IoT (ICCB-2018)*. Cham: Springer. pp. 1065-1073.

Schaefer, M.W. 2019. *Marketing rebellion: the most human company wins*. S.I.: Schaefer Marketing Solutions.

Schaefer, M.W. 2021. *The content code: six essential strategies to ignite your content, your marketing, and your business*. S.I.: Schaefer Marketing Solutions.

Scott, G. 2018. *5 Ways sport teams use CRM systems*. <https://biztechmagazine.com/article/2018/11/5-ways-sport-teams-use-crm-systems> Date of access: 17 June 2023.

Shank, M.D. & Lyberger, M.R. 2022. *Sport marketing: a strategic perspective*. 6th ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Shedrow, S. 2021. Student engagement & digital tools: lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. *AILACTE Journal*, 18:1-26.

Shen, L., Qin, C. & Luo, C. 2020. A grounded theory approach to brand value networks: the presumption logic standpoint. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 10(04):841-860.

Sherman, M. 2019. *Digital marketing vs traditional marketing: which produces better ROI?* <https://www.lyfemarketing.com/blog/digital-marketing-vs-traditional-marketing/> Date of access: 14 December 2019.

Simmons, J., Naraine, M.L. & Greenwell, C. 2023. Factors influencing fan acceptance or rejection of a sport team's revolutionary rebrand. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 32(2):91-104.

Sinha, N., Ahuja, V. & Medury, Y. 2011. Corporate blogs and internet marketing: using consumer knowledge and emotion as strategic variables to develop consumer engagement. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 18:185-199. <https://doi.org/10.1057/dbm.2011.24>

SmartyAds. 2020. *Sport advertising: benefits, types, strategies*. <https://smartyads.com/blog/sport-advertising-examples-and-tips/> Date of access: 13 September 2023.

Smith, A. 2012. *Introduction to sport marketing*. London: Routledge.

Smith, P. 2020. *Guide to your perfect digital marketing plan*. [London]: PR Smith Marketing Success.

Söderman, S. & Dolles, H. 2013. *Handbook of research on sport and business*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Solomon, M., Marshall, G., Stuart, E., Barnes, B. & Mitchell, V. 2013. *Marketing: real people, real decisions*. 2nd European ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Sorman, A. 2019. *The best way to map the customer journey: take a walk in their shoes*. https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/identify-customer-touchpoints/?ut_source=content_center&ut_source2=map-customer-journey-keep-customers-happy&ut_source3=inline&ut_ctatext=customer%2520touchpoints Date of access: 3 January 2020.

Sportal. 2018. *Six opportunities for SA sport rights holders to consider in 2018*. <https://www.bizcommunity.com/PressOffice/PressRelease.aspx?i=280138&ai=173879> Date of access: 18 August 2023.

Sport Recreation South Africa. 2012. The white paper on sport and recreation for the Republic of South Africa. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/white-paper-sport-and-recreation-june-201110.pdf Date of access: 15 November 2022.

- Stanley, J. & Plotkin, C.L. 2015. *Three ways to win without your sales funnel*.
<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/three-ways-to-win-without-your-sales-funnel> Date of access: 2 January 2020.
- Statista. 2023. *Social media: statistics & facts*. <https://www.statista.com/topics/1164/social-networks/> Date of access: 26 September 2023.
- Struwig, F.W. & Stead, G.B. 2001. *Planning, designing and reporting research*. Cape Town: Pearson Education.
- Stuckey, H.L. 2013. Three types of interviews: qualitative research methods in social health. *Journal of Social Health and Diabetes*, 1(02):056-059.
- Suter, W.N. 2011. *Introduction to educational research: a critical thinking approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Swan, S. 2022. *How to create a digital marketing plan using PR Smith's SOSTAC planning model*. <https://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-strategy/sostac-plan-example/> Date of access: 27 April 2022.
- Sweidan, G., Al-Dmour, H., Zu'bi, M.F. & Al-Dmour, R. 2012. The effect of relationship marketing on customer loyalty in the Jordanian pharmaceutical industry. *European Journal of Economics, Finance and Administrative Sciences*, 150:567-589.
- Thompson, A., Lachance, E.L., Parent, M.M. & Hoyer, R. 2022. A systematic review of governance principles in sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 23(6):1863-1888.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2022.2077795>
- Thompson, A.-J., Martin, A.J., Gee, S. & Geurin, A.N. 2017. Fans' perceptions of professional tennis events' social media presence: interaction, insight, and brand anthropomorphism. *Communication & Sport*, 5(5):579-603.
- Treadwell, D. & Davis, A. 2019. *Introducing communication research: paths of inquiry*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Trendafilova, S. & Babiak, K. 2013. Understanding strategic corporate environmental responsibility in professional sport. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 13(1-2):1-26.

- Troise, C. & Camilleri, M.A. 2021. The use of digital media for marketing, CSR communication and stakeholder engagement. In: Camilleri, M.A., ed. *Strategic corporate communication in the digital age*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing.
- United Nations. 2020. *The impact of COVID-19 on sport, physical activity and well-being and its effects on social development*. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2020/05/covid-19-sport/> Date of access: 23 March 2023.
- Urdan, T.C. 2016. *Statistics in plain English*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Van Heerden, C.H. & Van Heerden, N. 2003. Developing a body of knowledge for sport marketing in Africa. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation & Dance*, 9(2):250-262.
- Van Heerden, N. 2019. Sponsorship. In: Van Heerden, N., Mulder, D. & Sephapo, C.P., eds. *Integrated marketing communication*. Pretoria: Van Schaik. pp. 263-283.
- Vicki, M. 2018. *Entertainment and media outlook: 2018-2022*. <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/entertainment-and-media-outlook-2018-2022.pdf> Date of access: 22 June 2023.
- WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency). 2023. *Regional offices*. <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/who-we-are/offices/regional-offices> Date of access: 29 October 2023.
- Walliman, N. 2021. *Research methods: the basics*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Wereda, W. & Grzybowska, M. 2016. Customer experience - does it matter? *Modern Management Review*, 23(3):199-207.
- Wienclaw, R. 2017. Direct e-marketing. *Direct e-Marketing-Research Starters Business*, 2016:1-6.
- Wiltsie, A. 2017. *Proving marketing ROI: a digital marketing framework*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University. (Graduate project – MA in Media and Communication).
- Wimmer, R.D. & Dominick, J.R. 2006. *Mass media research: an introduction*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Wisdom, J. & Creswell, J.W. 2013. *Mixed methods: integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis while studying patient-centered medical home models*. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Witt, G.L. & Baird, D.E. 2018. *The gen Z frequency: how brands tune in and build credibility*. London: Kogan Page.

Wongkitrungrueng, A., Dehouche, N. & Assarut, N. 2020. Live streaming commerce from the sellers' perspective: implications for online relationship marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 36(5-6):488-518.

World Wide Worx. 2017. *SA internet penetration to reach 40% in 2017*.
<http://www.worldwideworx.com/internet2017/> Date of access: 11 August 2023.

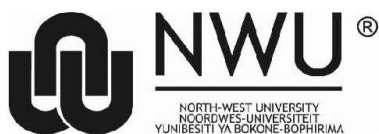
Yasmin, A., Tasneem, S. & Fatema, K. 2015. Effectiveness of digital marketing in the challenging age: an empirical study. *International Journal of Management Science and Business Administration*, 1(5):69-80.

Yong, A.G. & Pearce, S. 2013. A beginner's guide to factor analysis: focusing on exploratory factor analysis. *Tutorials in Quantitative Methods for Psychology*, 9(2):79-94.

Yuzdepski, Z. 2022. *Needs-based selling: following 5 phases of the modern customer journey*.
<https://www.vendasta.com/blog/following-modern-customer-journey/> Date of access: 11 October 2022.

Zarrella, D. 2013. *The science of marketing: when to tweet, what to post, how to blog, and other proven strategies*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

ANNEXURE A: ETHICS CLEARANCE (BASSREC)



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

12 June 2020

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Arts Research Ethics Committee (AREC)** on 12/06/2020, the Arts Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: The application of digital media marketing on sport marketing in South Africa
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof L Holtzhausen
Student: H.J. Degenaar

Ethics number:

N	W	U	-	0	1	0	1	9	-	2	0	-	A	7

Institution Study Number Year Status

Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single Study

Commencement date: 12/06/2020

Risk Category:

Low

Expiry date: 12/06/2024

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the AREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the AREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the AREC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the AREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-RERC and AREC reserves the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;

- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the AREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- AREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via 13128388@nwu.ac.za or 018 285 2301.

The AREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the AREC or the NWU-RERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof L. M. Fourie
Acting Chairperson NWU Arts Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ANNEXURE B: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

DR MICHELLE COETZEE

(D.Phil.Theology – St Augustine's College, 2014)

AUTHORISED LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER

TRADING AS: DR MICKY'S (SA) PROFESSIONAL LONGLITCH FIXING SERVICE

(English)

45A Collins St, Brixton, 2092, RSA • Cell +27 (0)79-516-8067 • coetzee.michelle71@gmail.com

17 November 2023

Dear H J Degenaar

Language editing

This is to confirm that I edited your doctoral dissertation, *A digital marketing framework for sport organisations in South Africa*, and that I indicated the necessary grammatical corrections, as well as suggesting some structure and clarity issues that need to be attended to.

Although I took all reasonable precautions to ensure that all grammatical and stylistic corrections are indicated, you remain responsible for the final product. Therefore, please check these suggested corrections before applying them and, if possible, again perform a spell check after you have implemented them in order to eliminate typing errors.

Please contact me if there are any queries or if I can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michelle Coetzee

ANNEXURE C: TRREE CERTIFICATES (OF RESEARCHER)



Zertifikat Certificat Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Koos Degenaar

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Introduction to Research Ethics

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/10/24
CID: XsOy2C9zg9


Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator

APPROVED BY
SIWF FMH
ISFM

Programmes de formation continue (2 crédits)
Continuing Education Programs (2 credits)

Foederatio
Pharmaceutica
Helveticae

FPH
Programmes de formation
postgraduée et continue

Programmes de formation continue
Continuing Education Programs

Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by :
European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) - Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) - Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/2891.html>)
Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSM/SAMSW) (www.sams.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

[REV : 20220217]



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that



Koos Degenaar

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Research Ethics Evaluation

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/10/24
CID: MN844RT8v

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Programmes de formation continue (2 crédits)
Continuing Education Programs (2 credits)

Foederatio
Pharmaceutica
Helveticae

FPH

Programmes de formation continue
Continuing Education Programs
Programmes de formation
postgraduée et continue

Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by :

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/2891.html>)
Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS/ASSM/SAMSW) (www.sams.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.krpe.ch)

[REV : 20220217]



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that



Koos Degenaar

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

Informed Consent

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/10/24
CID: Jlcwky3a

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Programmes de formation continue (2 crédits)
Continuing Education Programs (2 credits)

Foederatio
Pharmaceutica
Helveticae

FPH

Programmes de formation continue
Continuing Education Programs
Programmes de formation
postgraduée et continue

Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by :

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/2891.html>)
Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMS/ASSM/SAMSW) (www.samsw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.krpe.ch)

[REV : 20220217]



Zertifikat Certificat

Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that



Koos Degenaar

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

South Africa

du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/10/24
CID: 18F4JCZYzy

Professeur Dominique Sprumont
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Programmes de formation continue (2 crédits)
Continuing Education Programs (2 credits)

Foederatio
Pharmaceutica
Helveticae

FPH

Programmes de formation continue
Continuing Education Programs
Programmes de formation
postgraduée et continue

Ce programme est soutenu par - This program is supported by :

European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) (www.edctp.org) Swiss National Science Foundation (www.snf.ch) Canadian Institutes of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/2891.html>)
Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS/ASSM/SAMSW) (www.samsw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.krpe.ch)

[REV : 20220217]

ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEWS

1. Demographic Information
(a) What is your position at your sport organisation?
(b) How long have you been in the position?
(c) In which city you are working?
(d) How big is the team responsible for digital marketing?
2. Attributes of a digital marketing strategy in terms of sport
(a) Describe the context/environment in which your organisation functions?
(b) Please elaborate on your organisation's marketing approach. (Probe: for example, using new technology, smart phones, email, social media, SMS and WhatsApp, to name a few)
(c) Describe the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on your sport organisation?
3. Stakeholder relationship building
(a) What are your thoughts: who are your main stakeholders / customers / people with an interest in your organisation?
(b) How do you communicate with your stakeholders? (Probe: Did the internet and social media caused a change in the way you communicate?)
(c) How do you listen to what your customers are saying?
(d) What are your thoughts about a customer journey? (Probe: Explain what a customer touchpoint is).
(e) How do you deal with a customer complaint? (Probe: What is your interpretation of the term customer experience?)
(f) What do you think qualifies as content?
4. Digital marketing management
(a) What digital marketing tools do you use?
(b) What is the purpose of your organisation's website?
(c) On which social media channels does your organisation have a presence? (Probe: Why do you use these channels?)
(d) What stands out about your organisation?
(e) What are the greatest challenges in terms of your marketing strategy?
(f) What are your thoughts; how do you measure the success of your marketing strategy?

ANNEXURE E: ELECTRONIC SURVEY

Section A: Demographic information				
1. How do you identify yourself?				
	Male		Female	Neutral
2. What is your age?				
	0–20 years			
	21–30 years			
	31–40 years			
	41–50 years			
	51–60 years			
	61 years or more			
3. Please indicate the sporting code you participate in. You may choose more than one.				
	Rugby			
	Soccer			
	Cricket			
	Hockey			
	Netball			
	Cycling			
	Squash			
	Swimming			
	Golf			
	Tennis			
	Tables tennis			
	Badminton			
	Athletics			
	Road running			
	E-gaming			
Other, please specify				
4. For how many years have you participated in your current sporting code?				
	1–3 years	4–6 years	7–10 years	More than 10 years
Rugby				
Soccer				

Cricket				
Hockey				
Netball				
Cycling				
Squash				
Swimming				
Golf				
Tennis				
Tables tennis				
Badminton				
Athletics				
Road running				
E-gaming				
Other, please specify				

Section B: Digital marketing management

5. On which social media channels is your sporting code active? You may choose more than one.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube	Pinterest
Rugby						
Soccer						
Cricket						
Hockey						
Netball						
Cycling						
Squash						
Swimming						
Golf						
Tennis						
Tables tennis						
Badminton						
Athletics						
Road running						
E-gaming						
Other, please specify						

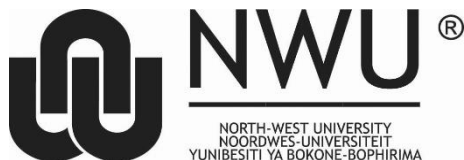
6. What other digital marketing tools does your sporting code use to interact and engage with you? You may choose more than one.				
	Google Ads			
	SEO			
	Email			
	SMS			
	WhatsApp			
	Website			
	Blog			
7. What actions will you typically take on a post on your sporting code's social channels? You may choose more than one.				
	Click like/love			
	Share the post			
	Write a comment			
	Re-tweet			
	Subscribe to their blog			
	Click on a link			
	Subscribe to their YouTube channel			
	Subscribe to their e-Newsletter			
Section C. Digital marketing content experience				
8. For each of the following areas listed, please tell us how effective you think these digital marketing strategies are in promoting your sporting code? Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is not effective, somewhat effective, effective or very effective.				
	Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Effective	Very Effective
Google ads				
Social media ads				
Direct email				
E-newsletters				
SMS				
WhatsApp				
Website				
Blogs				
Online Ads				
9. How satisfied are you with the information of your sporting code on their website?				
	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied

10. For each of the following areas listed, what is important for you when visiting your sporting code's website? Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is not important, of minor importance, important or critical.				
	Not important	Minor importance	Important	Critical
The content should be informative and provide the information I am looking for.				
The website should be easy to navigate				
The website must have a "contact us" section				
There should be a "connect with us on social media" section				
There should be a photo gallery				
Option to subscribe to electronic newsletter				
A section to leave a comment				
11. In what way do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Digital marketing channels are the most effective tools that sporting codes can use to market their sport or sport products?" Indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. For each of the following actions how do you make a buying decision of a sport product. Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is never, rarely, usually or always.				
	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Visit the website				
Acting on emails I receive				
Social media ads				
Ratings and reviews				
Testimonials				
Word-of-mouth				
Recommendations from family and friends				
Google searches				
Online advertising				
Direct marketing				
Print advertising				
Telemarketing				

13. Which of the following content types, does your sporting code use to interact and engage with you? Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is never, rarely, usually or always.				
	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Blog articles				
E-newsletters				
Social media posts				
Infographics				
Photographs				
Illustrations				
How-to videos				
Vox pops				
Sport videos				
Podcasts				
Music				
Soundbites				
Section D. Behaviour patterns				
14. The following factors are important for me when I choose to support a sport brand: Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is not important, of minor importance, important or critical				
	Not important	Minor importance	Important	Critical
The brand makes a noble promise				
The product is cheap				
The brand takes a stand regarding a good cause				
I can engage with the brand				
I can trust the brand				
The brand is ethical				
The brand asked my opinion				

15. I experience the following feelings when I am exposed to content about my sporting code. Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is never, rarely, usually or always.				
	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Excited to watch the full video ad				
Irritated and skip the video ad immediately				
Curious about what is going to follow				
Feel my privacy is being invaded				
Feel that I should have a choice to watch the ad or not				
16. I will interact with content on my social channels in the following way. Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is never, rarely, usually or always.				
	Never	Rarely	Usually	Always
Trust the information				
Search for it on Google				
Check the ratings				
Consult with my online community				
I do not trust promises made by brands				
17. I choose to watch sport in the following ways: Mark all the statements, indicating whether it is almost never, seldom, most of the time or always.				
	Almost Never	Seldom	Most of the time	Always
Attend a live event				
Watch the full event on TV				
Watch highlights on social media				
Watch sport on live streaming mobile apps				
Watch edited versions on YouTube				
18. How do you rate your sporting code's overall digital marketing presence?				
	1	2	3	4
				5

ANNEXURE F: LETTER OF INVITATION: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>
Corporate Relations and Marketing
Email: Koos.Degenaar@nwu.ac.za

To: The Marketing Manager, The Two Oceans
Marathon

7/11/2022

RE: PhD RESEARCH PROJECT: THE APPLICATION OF A DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY ON SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a senior manager for Digital Marketing Communication at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus and I am busy with a PhD research study with the aim of developing a framework for digital marketing for sport in South Africa. My promoters are Profs Lida Holtzhausen Lida.Holtzhausen@nwu.ac.za and Lynnette Fourie Lynnette.Fourie@nwu.ac.za.

As you are aware, new technology has changed every aspect of our lives, including the sport sector. New technology has not only resulted in an information overload, but also empowered customers to choose what information they want to consume. This implies that sport organisations find themselves in a situation in which traditional marketing practices are no longer sufficient. The sport sector, therefore, has to adapt its marketing strategies in order to remain relevant in the market.

The researcher seeks to explore what the current digital marketing practices of sport organisations in South Africa are so as to inform a model for a digital marketing strategy for sport.

The Two Oceans Marathon has been identified as one of the largest and most reputed sporting organisations in South Africa, which I would like to include in the research. I would like to conduct a semi-structured interview with your chief marketing officer or a person in a similar position. The interview questions will be focused on background information concerning your organisation and its current digital marketing practices.

Please note that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and the responses will be dealt with anonymously. If at any stage the respondent feels uncomfortable, he or she may decline to answer a specific question. The responses will be treated with the greatest confidentiality and will be used solely for purposes of this research. The study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical standards prescribed by North-West University and the research has been cleared by the Institutional Research Ethics Committee of North-West University (NWU Ethical number: NWU-01019-20-A7).

Yours Sincerely

Koos Degenaar
Senior Manager: Digital Marketing Communication
North-West University

ANNEXURE G: SURVEY MESSAGE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Invitation to participate in Quantitative Survey for PhD degree

Dear Participant

As a PhD student in Communication Studies at the North-West University, I, Koos Degenaar, am conducting research for my dissertation titled *The Application of Digital Marketing to Sport Marketing in South Africa* under the supervision of Prof Lida Holtzhausen (director, NWU School of Communication Studies and supervisor for this PhD study).

With this, I request that you please participate in the electronic survey below.

The survey will take 10–15 minutes to complete. Submissions for the survey will close at 17:00 on 30 November 2022.

Background and need for the study:

As you are aware, new technology has changed every aspect of our lives, including the sport sector. New technology has not only resulted in an information overload but has also empowered customers to choose what information they want to consume. This implies that sport organisations find themselves in a situation in which traditional marketing practices are no longer sufficient. The sport sector, therefore, has to adapt its marketing strategies in order to remain relevant in the market.

The researcher seeks to explore the perceptions of sport stakeholders on digital marketing strategies utilised by sport entities in South Africa so as to inform a model/framework for a digital marketing strategy for sport. This is strictly academic research and will not be submitted to any business entity. The research will be published on the Boloka, open access Institutional Repository of the North-West University.

Take Note: Ethical Considerations

Please note that the survey does not request you to fill in any personal information. All submissions will, therefore, remain anonymous and there will be no way of determining by whom any submission was provided. All submissions of this survey will be used only for the purpose of this study and processed as statistical data, which will be interpreted in the findings thereof.

This study has received ethical clearance from the NWU Faculty of Humanities Research Innovation Ethics and Higher Degrees, as well as BASSREC (NWU Ethical number: NWU-01019-20-A7). The survey has also been assessed by the NWU's Statistical Consultation Services to confirm validity and reliability.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to assist in this study.

Kind Regards
Koos Degenaar

ANNEXURE H: TURNITIN REPORT

13128388:Koos_Degenaar_FinalPhD_-_20_Nov_2023.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

11 %	11 %	3 %	4 %
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	repository.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	4 %
2	dspace.nwu.ac.za Internet Source	1 %
3	Submitted to North West University Student Paper	1 %
4	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1 %
5	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	<1 %
6	dokumen.pub Internet Source	<1 %
7	docshare.tips Internet Source	<1 %
8	coek.info Internet Source	<1 %
9	vdoc.pub Internet Source	<1 %

ANNEXURE I: CONFIRMATION LETTER GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT

CONFIRMATION LETTER

2023/11/22

To whom this may concern,

I hereby confirm that the design and layout of the models in the PhD thesis: *A digital marketing framework for sport organisations in South Africa* by H J Degenaar was done by myself, Barbara Christina van Straaten and were based on draft models supplied by the candidate. Furthermore tables were formatted and table spacing standardised.

Yours sincerely,

Christina van Straaten
blackpepperdesign@gmail.com
072 327 3244

ANNEXURE J: CONFIRMATION LETTER REFERENCE EDITING

CONFIRMATION LETTER

24 November 2023

Technical editing of text references and bibliography

I, Anneke Coetzee, declare that I edited the text references and bibliography of the PhD thesis of HJ Degenaar according to the style guidelines of the NWU Harvard Referencing Style.

The completeness of the final product remains the responsibility of the student.

A Coetzee

A.G.S. Coetzee

E-mail: agscoetzee@gmail.com

Cell: 073 157 0502

ANNEXURE K: CONFIRMATION LETTER TECHNICAL LAYOUT



I, Petra Gainsford (ID number: 6903090040089), hereby declare, that I have done the technical editing according to the NWU standard for, H J DEGENAAR, for Thesis submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Communication at the North-West University

Petra Gainsford