EXPLORING INTEGRATED MARKETING
COMMUNICATION DISCONNECTS IN THE
AUSTRALIAN SPORT SYSTEM

A dissertation document submitted in fulfilment for the requirement of
confirmation of candidature for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated integrated marketing communications (IMC) approaches of state sporting organisations (SSOs). In particular, the strategies used, and content and messages delivered by these organisations are compared with the wants and needs of consumers and best practice methods to identify any disconnects present within communication strategies. Data was collected from managers and consumers spanning three SSOs using a mixed method approach including semi-structured interviews with staff and an online survey distributed to sport members and participants. Consumer perceptions were in line with organisational attitudes ruling out a disconnect between those two user groups, however, differences were identified between suggested best practice methods and actual IMC delivered suggesting improvements are required in this space.

Scale items and constructs were identified and developed through an extensive literature review and semi-structured interviews with relevant staff from the three SSOs. Interviews suggested that organisations operate with scarce resources and use a limited range of tools with no specific evaluation protocol and adoption and implementation based on conveniently chosen actions rather than as part of a strategic process. Statistical testing resulted in data showing an above average to moderate rating for IMC elements based on psychometric testing including experiential benefit, functional benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions. A medium to high rating of consumer perceptions over a number of IMC components providing guidance towards greater synergy and maximisation of the benefits provided by IMC was observed.

A conceptual framework relevant to the sporting context was derived. The conceptual framework representing the complete IMC process was found to be of good fit with the data obtained with path analysis indicating a significant relationship between the constructs. These relationships between constructs supported existing literature in defining functional and experiential benefits, satisfaction, and relationship quality with these having a significant impact on organisational outcomes. Although the framework indicated strong relationships between constructs, low variance was observed suggesting that although the focus of this investigation was on IMC, services delivered a range of other factors (mediators and inhibitors) exerted a large effect on the relationship between the satisfaction and relationship quality constructs and behavioural intentions.
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DECLARATION

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies and tools including social media and Web 2.0 technologies have been valuable in many industries in assisting the attraction and retention of consumers. Industries and contexts where IMC strategies and activities have been employed successfully range from tourism, hospitality, health, education, and sport (Belch & Belch, 2015; Finne & Gronroos, 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

For sport organisations, the use of IMC through relationship marketing and in a service dominant logic context, aims to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships to achieve the goals of attracting and retaining members and increasing participation. This is especially critical in not for profit sport, given the importance of participation and membership as both a direct revenue stream, but also an antecedent to public funding and awareness of the sport. Slack and Parent (2006) and, Robinson and France (2011) present IMC as a solution to the problems concerned with resource generation, and they posit that promotion, commonly in the form of IMC, is the most important component of the marketing mix for not for profit organisations.

Contemporary marketing literature highlights an increasing communications gap where the expectations and wants of the consumers (market) are in disconnect to the products and services offered by organisations. Consumers have been shown to demand and expect several functional and experiential benefits from the use of an organisations IMC, and when these expectations are not met, a gap or disconnect between the market and organisations can occur. This can result in many negative outcomes for the organisation, including decreased engagement and negative word of mouth. This thesis investigates the effectiveness of
Australian State Sporting Organisation (SSO) communication, specifically IMC strategies, and content delivered as a result of these strategies. This is undertaken from the perspective of SSOs identified as Tier Two sport organisations, which are those classified as representing sports that are not media intensive, but play an important role in Australia through being Olympic and/or Commonwealth Games classified sports.

IMC through its encompassing of new and traditional media communication channels and the integration of messaging including the consistency of communication from lower level organisations (community sports clubs and associations) to peak state and national level bodies (SSOs, NSOs) has the potential to provide a wide reaching promotional and communications tool. This research aims to investigate the digital and new media platforms utilised in integrated marketing communications (IMC) of state sporting organisations (SSOs). As such, this thesis concentrates on the digital platforms of IMC delivery employed by SSOs in Australia and any further reference to IMC is scoped to these new media and digital platforms.

A framework was developed to explore both organisational and consumer perspectives of IMC delivery, consumer perceptions were compared to organisational attitudes, and these attitudes were also compared to best practice methods to identify any gaps or disconnects. Data collection and analysis included both a qualitative investigation of organisational attitudes towards IMC, and a quantitative testing and measurement of consumer perceptions of the IMC delivered by the participating SSOs. This data was applied to a conceptual framework derived from existing literature, to identify elements within the IMC function where consumer perceptions are not in line with organisational attitudes or do not reflect a high level of consumer satisfaction. This approach enabled a comparison of the wants/needs of the SSOs members, the e-marketing orientations, and philosophies of SSO
staff and management, and the communication services provided by these sporting organisations to be undertaken.

The investigation was carried out in two stages. Following a literature review to create the conceptual framework and provide a basis for the research questions, there was an organisational and consumer level of exploration. Firstly, document analysis and interviews with marketing managers or equivalent staff of Tier Two Australian SSOs occurred, to enable the researcher to determine the IMC strategies and orientation of the respective organisations. Secondly, a consumer survey investigating attitudes and behaviours linked to these organisational IMC activities was undertaken, with the results being applied to the conceptual framework to investigate the existence of any capabilities gap or disconnect between consumer expectations and organisational IMC function.

The aim is to determine whether the conceptual framework can be applied to existing models based on a systems process framework. The questions posed seek to determine: a) whether an accurate representation of the strategic function of digital communication (IMC) in Tier Two Australian SSOs exists and: b) whether a gap exists between what consumers expect/need, what is currently being delivered, and whether it is best practice.

1.2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

There is no more important time for Australian SSOs to embrace and implement Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), including frameworks to ensure effective and efficient use. As sport organisations face increasing competition for public funding, membership and participation numbers, and increased scrutiny on how public funding is allocated, attracting and utilising resources is critical to the effective and efficient operation of these organisations (Winand, Scheerder, Vos & Zintz, 2016; Winand, Zintz & Scheerder,
IMC has been suggested to be an important dimension or outcome of State Sport Organisation (SSO) performance (Bayle & Madella, 2002; McDonald & Marsh, 1990; Vos, Breesch, Késenne, Van Hoecke, Vanreusel & Scheerder, 2011; Winand, Scheerder, Vos & Zintz, 2016), providing a tool to generate public and external funding, as well as communicate and engage with internal and external stakeholders.

New marketing activities are constantly evolving, and traditional marketing activities are being modified into their electronic equivalents, with these activities being adopted and implemented by organisations. The suite of activities within IMC (including social media, website usage, and database and customer relations management) are playing an increasing role, given their capability to reach, communicate with, and engage large audiences in a low cost, highly efficient and targeted manner compared to traditional media platforms. A range of new media platforms are proposed for investigation and discussed in depth in Chapter Two, however, with the fast pace digital media is advancing not all contemporary platforms were investigated. The platforms chosen were selected as they were shown in literature to be currently playing a role in the delivery of IMC in a not for profit sport setting. This has ruled out advances in technology including Virtual Reality, and changes in messaging platforms including Snapchat and WhatsApp. While a role exists for these tools in the delivery of IMC in the not for profit context, they are not widely utilised or identified as being relevant.

IMC (also commonly referred to as promotions in the traditional marketing mix) is the means through which an organisation communicates data about the organisations product, place, and price (Thrassou, 2012). Keller (2001) expands on this by stating that promotion or marketing communications are, “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, incite, and remind consumers - directly or indirectly - about the brands they sell” (p. 819). IMC provides organisations with an avenue to engage in “dialogue with their consumers and
can also be the voice of a brand” (Eagleman, 2013, p. 2). Shilbury, Westerbeek, Quick, Funk and Karg (2017) expand on these definitions, explaining that strategic IMC programs need to be developed as a systematic process. This process should be continuous and take the shape of an evaluative measurement loop (Shilbury et al., 2017), where identification of the aims or objectives should lead to the selection and development of tools or activities to be used, and then an assessment of these tools should be undertaken leading to modifications.

IMC can be described as a public relations and communication tool motivating the public to display favourable attitudes and behaviours towards an organisation (Belch & Belch, 2015; Slack & Parent, 2006). Many SSOs have experienced increased marginalisation at the hands of larger, more popular sports in this era of professionalisation, and consequently, the resources available to these organisations are dwindling. This marginalisation leads to limited and restricted funding for these organisations (Bayle, 2005; Enjolras, 2002; Hoeber, Doherty, Hoeber & Wolfe 2015; Stier & Schneider, 1999; Winand et al., 2016). This reduction in available resources requires that sport administrators generate resources via external funding. However, IMC, if adopted and implemented incorrectly, can pose many negative issues to organisations including inefficient use of resources, decrease of consumer engagement and negative word of mouth (Eagleman, 2013; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Magnusen, Kim & Kim, 2014; Winand et al., 2016).

This study focusses on Tier Two State Sporting Organisations (SSOs) which are proposed as those that are not highly ‘corporate’ organisations, but still present as important given significant participation and high performance functions and their representation of Olympic Games and/or Commonwealth Games sports. While all sport organisations can claim to be marginalised in the very competitive sport landscape, it is suggested these organisations are under particular pressures in the current global sporting environment, but have great potential to be positively affected by marketing and promotion programs (ASC,
Findings related to these Tier Two organisations are also generalisable across a number of contexts including other sports, charities, health and higher education due to the not for profit nature of the bodies and also the traditional, delegate governance structures employed. Whitburn, Karg and Turner (2018) developed a classification system initially to categorise Tier Two Australian National Sporting Organisations (NSO). This classification approach was refined and applied at an SSO level. From this approach, for an organisation to be classed as a Tier Two SSO they must:

- be a recognised SSO by the Australian Sports Commission (Australia’s peak body charged with providing government funding, building sport capability, and facilitating high performance sport)
- employ between three and 10 fulltime staff
- derive a majority of revenue from direct public funding and participation/membership fees and
- not obtain significant revenue from professional leagues or competitions.

Tier Two SSOs possess strong similarities in revenue levels, staff numbers, sources of revenue, and current levels of government funding. The majority of the organisations employ between three and 10 full time staff (excluding coaching staff) and have revenues ranging from $1 million to $3 million. Hockey and Gymnastics in the state of Victoria are the two largest of these SSOs. These two organisations employ seven (gymnastics) and eight (hockey) staff and record revenue of $2.7 million (hockey) and $2.6 million (gymnastics). In Victoria there are 56 organisations that would be classified as Tier Two SSOs (Sport & Recreation Victoria, 2017).
Due to its emergent role within sport organisations, there is very little knowledge about the use of IMC in SSOs, with practice outpacing theory in this area. While frameworks to describe and analyse traditional promotion approaches in profit and not for profit organisations exist, such adaptations for IMC strategies in SSOs are yet to be developed. With an increase in the number of SSOs being marginalised by commercial and social pressures, the need to leverage IMC as a tool to combat this also increases. Considering this, this research aims to provide Australian SSOs with a framework to implement IMC activities and strategies efficiently and effectively, to facilitate the increase in public and external funding obtained, and to use existing funding more effectively.

1.3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

The research context undertaken aims to make clear the underlying issues, and assist in laying out how these were developed and addressed. Two underlying issues regarding Australian SSOs and the IMC function are identified: 1) What is the problem or problems faced by Australian SSOs? (SSO’s face environmental uncertainty and resource constraints based on financial, social, and political pressures) and: 2) What is the solution? (IMC is a cost-effective communications tool that by increasing consumer engagement can bring certain benefits to the organisation). These two underlying issues are now expanded upon.

It is suggested Tier Two Australian SSOs are under significant pressure due to changes in the current sporting environment, but have great potential to be positively affected by marketing and promotional programs (ASC, 2012; Crawford, 2009; Stewart & Smith, 2000). Tier Two SSOs are currently experiencing financial, social, and political pressures (ASC, 2012; Crawford, 2009; Stewart & Smith, 2000; Winand et al., 2016). These pressures are many and varied. Financial pressures include increased competition for public funding,
social pressures include scrutiny of activities and programs run and changing leisure preferences of communities, and political pressures include priority changes in public funding, and policy and legislature changes. IMC has been suggested as a tool assist in addressing these issues with Winand et al. (2016) investigating these issues in a similar not for profit setting. It is shown through enhancing consumer engagement through IMC channels increased consumption activities can be encouraged (Park & Kim, 2000; Winand et al., 2016). Addressing these issues however, requires knowledge of the strategies and tools that are employed to obtain external funding, and the frameworks utilised to efficiently use existing funds.

Existing knowledge both in non-profit organisations and corporate sports illustrate the value and importance of IMC in obtaining revenue and increasing membership numbers (Park & Kim, 2000; Winand et al., 2016). However, it has been shown that Australian not for profit sporting organisations (Whitburn et al., 2018) are not realising the full potential of IMC and digital communication to alleviate these pressures. A lack of strategy, ad hoc implementation and adoption of tools and programs, and non-existent evaluation tools measuring the effectiveness of IMC have been identified in Australian sporting organisations (Whitburn et al., 2018). These shortfalls prevent the full benefits of IMC being realised by sports organisations, leading to missed fundraising opportunities and inefficient allocation of resources. This thesis investigates IMC utility at the SSO level, to develop a framework for the efficient and effective delivery of IMC strategies to provide SSOs with the tools required to alleviate this environmental pressure.

Not for profit organisations are becoming increasingly concerned with market pressures more commonly associated with profit orientated or corporate organisations. Competition for funding, and the need to obtain additional resources to fulfil objectives, is becoming increasingly pressing, and diverting resources away from the organisations primary
goals (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009; Winand, Scheerder, Vos & Zintz, 2016; Winand, Zintz & Scheerder, 2012). Robinson and France (2011) illustrate the importance of IMC for SSOs. They bring to light the marginalisation of many not for profit sports in the face of expanding professionalisation in the sporting environment. This marginalisation both limits and restricts funding for these organisations (Stier & Schneider, 1999), leading to the expectation that sport administrators will generate resources via external funding.

While IMC in the profit landscape is primarily aimed at the purchaser of the product or service (Burton & Howard, 1999), the nature of SSOs dictate that promotional and communication activities need to be aimed at a wide range of stakeholders (Hall et al., 2003; Worth, 2009). Burton and Howard (1999) expand on this by declaring that the role of promotion in the not for profit sector is critical and needs to be based on “influencing stakeholder beliefs and attitudes, rather than promoting sales” (p. 378), which is the primary aim of IMC in the for-profit sector. This is supported by Worth (2009), who explains that not for profit organisations can change their promotional and communication strategies “in response to information about what customers, clients, or donors need and want, while remaining faithful to its core purposes” (p. 214).

Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) discovered that in not for profit organisations, top management responded to questioning which suggested that regarding marketing activities, the most important were all communication / promotional activities, namely, fundraising, public relations, and advertising. Furthermore, the same respondents, when requested to brainstorm as many marketing elements they thought were appropriate for their organisations, also produced a list headed by IMC activities. In this list, the top three marketing activities were advertising, public relations, and image building / positioning, illustrating the importance of communication and promotional activities in the not for profit landscape.
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVE

The context of this research supports the importance of investigation of the IMC function in Australian Tier Two SSOs, and conceptualisation of a framework representing this function. Chapter Two provides an extensive review of literature focussing on the following central themes: consumer engagement, consumer behaviour, IMC, service quality, relationship quality, service dominant logic and relationship marketing, and organisational outcomes and performance (Berry, 1985; Gronroos, 1982; Gronroos 1994; Kim & Trail, 2011; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006). Central themes relevant to this study are introduced and constructs developing the research framework are presented. Figure 1.1 presents the research framework which utilises the system process model of inputs, throughputs, and outputs (Chelladurai, 1987; Winand et al., 2016) to create a roadmap of organisational IMC strategies and activities.

Beginning with the original IMC message delivered by the organisation, consumer attitudes towards these messages are investigated. Service quality is investigated in the form of functional and experiential benefits with the effect of these on consumer satisfaction tested. Consumer satisfaction is linked to relationship quality and this relationship is tested. Relationship quality is investigated as it has been shown to have a strong direct link to consumer engagement factors, which are introduced, and then these factors are linked to functional organisational outcomes. As such the framework covers the entire IMC process from inputs (Organisation IMC, Consumer Attitudes), to throughputs (Satisfaction, Relationship Quality, Consumer Engagement Behaviours), and resulting in outputs (Behavioural Intentions, Functional Organisational Outcomes).
Figure 1.1. Organisational IMC Function Framework (Research Questions linked within Framework)
Winand et al. (2016) suggests that there exists a disconnect, or gap, between the IMC delivered by sport organisations and the needs and wants of their markets or core consumers or members. As such, the overarching aim of this thesis is: a) to determine the existence of a gaps between the expectations of consumers, the IMC function delivered by Australian Tier Two SSOs and: b) to identify best practice methods suggested by literature. This aim is operationalised in two parts. Firstly, whether the organisational attitudes towards IMC displayed by participating sport bodies show a gap or disconnect when compared to the consumer perceptions of the IMC function delivered. And secondly, whether a gap or disconnect exists between the IMC function delivered by Australian State Sport Organisations and best practice strategies and activities (Shaltoni & West, 2010; Winand et al., 2016). The relationships investigated by the research questions provide information that will be used to determine whether such a gap exists. If a gap exists, then this research seeks to provide theoretical and practical contributions to address the issues presented by this gap or disconnect. The stages in the Figure 1.1 framework develop the overarching research question, and the specific research sub-questions. The overarching questions this thesis seeks to resolve are:

*Is there a disconnect between consumer expectations and organisation IMC functions in Tier Two state sporting organisations, and,*

*Does a gap or disconnect exist between IMC delivered by Australian sport organisations and best practice methods suggested in literature?*

This research question is a function of staged research sub-questions posed within the conceptual framework. This framework as presented in Figure 1.1 and based on a systems process model provided by Chelladurai (1987) and Winand et al. (2016) is discussed further
in Chapter Two, but to aid in understanding the research questions a summary follows. These five questions follow the direction of the strategic function of IMC, as identified in Figure 1.1. Inputs for the system are based on the IMC function delivered and are measured by consumer perceptions, these then are influenced by the throughputs, in this context satisfaction and relationship quality, before the outputs of the system process are delivered as behavioural intentions leading to positive functional outcomes.

1. Organisation IMC: Previous work (Eagleman, 2013; Whitburn et al., 2018), suggests that Australian Tier Two SSOs adopt and implement various IMC and promotional strategies based on organisation orientation, resources available and outcomes desired. RQ1 investigates the selected SSOs to determine whether the organisations understand, utilise, or integrate IMC from a strategic or ad hoc basis, to determine the approach taken by SSOs towards IMC. This is defined as an organisation’s digital orientation, and is based on Shaltoni and West’s (2010) electronic marketing orientation framework. RQ1 is therefore represented as:

**RQ1:** What IMC strategies are adopted and implemented by Tier Two Australian SSOs, and what is their digital orientation?

2. Consumer attitudes: Questionnaires based on scale items developed through the literature review (Park & Kim, 2000; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011) and refined through a panel of industry / academic experts, were developed to measure elements of organisational IMC. Questions provide a measure of consumer attitudes towards the strategies and activities implemented by the chosen organisations. Strength of factors including experiential benefits, functional benefits, information quality and interaction quality are investigated to illustrate consumer attitudes towards the elements constituting individual organisations IMC. RQ2 is presented as:
RQ2: What are the consumer attitudes to IMC strategies adopted and implemented by Australian Tier Two SSOs?

3. Service and Relationship Quality: Many authors have suggested a direct link between service quality and relationship quality (Kim & Trail, 2011; Magnusen, Kim & Kim, 2014; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006). Within the not for profit sporting context, scant research has been undertaken in this area and, as such, this thesis will explore the relationship between the two and whether other, external factors (facilitators and inhibitors), have a significant effect on this relationship. This leads to development of RQ3 which appears in two distinct parts:

RQ3: a) Is service quality directly linked to consumer relationship quality within Tier Two Australian SSOs?

b) Do other factors, inhibitors, and facilitators, exist, and if so, what is the impact they have on service quality?

4. Consumer Engagement Behaviours: Relationship quality has been shown to elicit a range of consumer behaviours including reciprocity, loyalty, commitment, and trust (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Hollebeek, 2011; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). RQ4 investigated the links between relationship quality and these consumer behaviours in the context of Australian Tier Two SSOs, and is stated as:

RQ4. What consumer engagement behaviours does relationship quality facilitate?

5. Functional organisational outcomes desired by Tier Two Australian SSOs, such as an increase in participation, revenue, awareness, and brand perception (Kim, Trail, Lim & Kim, 2009; Winand et al., 2010), suggest the possibility of direct and measurable relationships with consumer behaviours. RQ5 identified these links between consumer
behaviours regarding IMC strategies and organisational outcomes for Australian Tier Two SSOs. RQ 5 is presented as:

**RQ5. What functional organisational outcomes are achieved through consumer behaviours?**

To address the research questions, two stages of data gathering were undertaken. RQ1, as predominantly a background stage, involved undertaking interviews with SSOs to determine the IMC function delivered by these SSOs, and the organisations perception of these. From there RQ2-RQ4 involve distribution of surveys to consumers across these three SSOs to ascertain the level of consumer attitudes and engagement with the IMC. Finally, analysis of the quantitative results using statistical tools including EFA, CFA and SEM, was undertaken to address RQ5.

1.5. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Many Australian SSOs have experienced marginalisation at the hands of larger, more popular sports in this era of increasing professionalisation, and therefore, the resources available to these organisations are dwindling. Slack and Parent (2006) and others have presented IMC as a solution to such problems concerned with resource generation, with promotion often posited as the most important component of the marketing mix for not for profit organisations (Donilcar & Lazarevski, 2009; Robinson & France, 2011; Slack & Parent, 2006). Chelladurai, Szyszlo and Haggerty (1987), Madella (1998) and Winand et al. (2010), in seminal works, reinforced the importance of IMC to SSOs and their effectiveness by identifying promotion as a critical factor of organisational performance. Frameworks for traditional promotion, promotion in not for profit organisations and IMC exist (Donilcar & Lazarevski, 2009; Dwyer, 2011; Iokamidis, 2010), but a model for the use of IMC in SSOs
has not been developed. Therefore, a lack of theoretical and practical knowledge of the IMC function and its best practice employment guided by a conceptual framework, prevents organisations from effectively and efficiently implement and adopt the suite of IMC tools available.

Despite the noted importance of IMC, there is minimal understanding of whether SSOs employ IMC best practice (or in fact any uniform practice). This lack of a clear understanding suggests that many SSOs may in fact, employ ad hoc strategies, and the possibility of inefficient use of scarce resources arises. This possibility of a ‘less than best practice’ approach towards the use of IMC, likely prevents sport organisations from providing high quality programs and activities to the public. In an age where the importance of the benefits of sport activities are becoming increasingly important, and the capacity to disseminate information is more readily available, gaining a better understanding of the process is vital to any under-resourced sporting organisation. With an increase in the number of SSOs being marginalised by commercial and social pressures, the need to leverage IMC as a tool to combat these pressure increases.

If better understood, IMC can provide marginalised or small sports lacking in resources and funding, a valuable tool to increase their capacity and ensure they can continue to provide sporting activities to the public. Direct outcomes from an increase in effectiveness of IMC use include an increase of revenue through higher numbers of participants and members, and greater engagement with these members and participants. Greater participation and engagement leads to increased consumption of the sport, an increase in awareness of the sport, and can extend to positive word of mouth conversations, which can also raise awareness of the sport and programs provided by the organisation.
1.6. THESIS STRUCTURE

The overarching research problem and context focus on the Australian not for profit sport sector, and the definitions and evolution of promotion and IMC. The research questions and conceptual framework that guide development of the thesis were identified and an overview of the structure is provided in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 Overview of Thesis Structure

A literature review discussing both organisation and consumer perspectives of IMC strategies and activities is presented in Chapter Two. Literature is developed around topics linked to IMC, represented by the key central themes of consumer engagement, consumer behaviour, IMC, service quality, relationship quality, service dominant logic and relationship marketing, and organisational outcomes and performance (Berry, 1985; Gronroos, 1982; Gronroos 1994; Kim & Trail, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006). Chapter Three presents the methodology employed. Document analysis, surveys, and interviews of selected Tier Two Australian SSOs provided initial data for developing the framework, and then the qualitative
and quantitative analysis of this data was undertaken. Survey tools arising from the literature are explained.

Chapter Four reviews the qualitative information garnered from staff interviews with the participating organisations, alongside secondary document analysis of these organisations. Major themes relating to the attitudes of the organisations towards the implementation and adoption of IMC activities and strategies were highlighted and a discussion of this information in relation to the literature review is developed. Conclusions are posited, with implications and limitations of the qualitative components of the study presented.

Chapter Five is presented in two sections with section one concerned with the development and refinement of the scale items. Section Two introduced and discussed the initial quantitative results from the consumer surveys, presenting descriptive statistical measures, including demographic and user group variances across the SSOs and within the whole sample population. This was undertaken to identify variances of consumer perception based on respondent characteristics. Demographic segmentation included gender and age, while user group segmentation included internet use, sport participation level and time involved with the sport.

Chapter Six subjected the quantitative results to a number of statistical tests including factor analysis, validity, and reliability testing. The data was found to be robust and appropriate for use in the investigation and, as such, was analysed and applied to the proposed conceptual framework. Discussion of this within the context of the research questions occurred in Chapter Seven. Conclusions, implications, and limitations were drawn from this discussion and are provided in Chapter Eight, identifying both theoretical and practical contributions to knowledge from the study.
1.7. DELIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH / DELIMITATIONS OF SCOPE AND KEY ASSUMPTIONS

The thesis focused on three Australian Tier Two SSOs as the unit of analysis. Selection of these organisations reduced the scope of the dissertation into a more manageable framework. As a result, a number of delimitations were identified, and these are addressed.

Use of the Australian sport environment allowed convenience of data collection and limited the contextual and environmental variables that could be present if comparing sport delivery in different nations. Elements of the macro-environment including legal, economic, and political influences on sport organisations can differ across national sport systems, meaning fixing the location of the units of analysis to one sporting system can eliminate any variance due to these factors.

Limiting the research to Tier Two SSOs enabled similar organisations which were likely to be faced with similar issues around IMC to be investigated. The status of these organisations suggests that positive functional benefits can result from improving IMC use. Given that Tier Two SSOs operate under the Australian sporting system, these results should be treated with caution outside of the Australian system as contextual factors differ.

The final delimitation deals with the small sample size of the organisations investigated. The characteristics of the sports investigated need to be taken into consideration when applying these methods and findings to other sports and results may differ due to characteristic contextual factors.
1.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One outlined the research aim and questions to be asked. The research contexts, represented by investigating Tier Two Australian SSOs and their IMC approach, was outlined in respect to the overarching objectives of the study. The rationale and contributions to knowledge were introduced and the method to be employed outlined. Chapter Two introduced the relevant literature, which supports the formation of the research questions and conceptual framework.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter Two reviews existing issues and theories in the literature relating to IMC use in sport. The literature review focuses on the context of sport, introducing SSOs and commenting on the way that IMC impacts these organisations. The introduction of a systems approach towards initiation of IMC follows, culminating in a definition of IMC and tracing its evolution to the customer focussed, technology driven suite of tools and strategies currently available. Existing work in similar contexts is provided to support the development of the conceptual framework employed.

2.1. CONTEXT: SPORT ORGANISATIONS, PROMOTION AND PERFORMANCE

2.1.1. Structure of Sport Systems and Performance

Sport is unique, and an important part of social fabric with the ability to transcend demographic, religious and socio-cultural barriers. Coakley (2011) posit that “many scholars identify sports as well established, officially governed competitive physical activities in which participants are motivated by internal and external rewards” (p. 5). Sport displays unique characteristics, as described by Shilbury et al. (2017) who explain that “it has set and defined rules; it is highly organised; it is play like in nature and is based on physical prowess; it depends upon specialised facilities and equipment; it involves uncertainty of outcome based on skill, strategy and chance; and competition, cooperation and conflict form the basis of the sporting contest and sporting leagues” (p. 12). In addition, Pitts, Fielding and Miller (1994, p. 176) explain the sport industry as a construct that encompasses all “sport related goods, services, places, people and ideas – offered to the customer”. These goods and services can range from sport participation, sport spectating (both live and through various media channels), equipment and apparel, sporting facilities and infrastructure, professional, business
and media services, and the myriad of recreation activities that adhere to the above characteristics outlined above.

According to Shilbury and Moore (2006), Australian sport in the 1970s was dominated by volunteers, with both decision making and the implementation of programs falling into their hands. Government funding programs, through the 1980s to the present day, were implemented to address the need for centralised elite sport infrastructure and participation facilities (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 2003; Shilbury & Moore, 2006; Westerbeek et al., 1995). This evolution led to the transformation of SSOs into commercialised bodies run by professional staff supported by a declining number of volunteers. Stewart (2007) outlines this evolution in his model of Australian sport development, which identifies four phases of evolution of organised sport and sporting organisations in Australia as; kitchen table administration, commercialisation, bureaucratisation, and corporatisation.

Commercialisation represents the second phase (Stewart, 2007), and it occurs when a sport utilises its commercial value to create additional revenue streams to the membership fees and social fundraising that were central to the kitchen table administration. This phase occurred in Australia and in many other parts of the world from the 1980s to the mid-1990s (Shilbury & Moore, 2006), and saw an influx of government funding facilitating the move away from the kitchen table model of administration. The third and fourth phases, bureaucratisation and corporatisation (Stewart, 2007), began in the mid-1990s and continue to the present. Many sports recognised the need for more effective and complex structures to fulfil strategic objectives (Shilbury & Moore, 2006). The Australian government, national, and state sporting bodies also realised this and encouraged the transition to a bureaucratised and corporatised structure for all sport governing bodies in the country. This led to a business model being introduced increasing organisational responsibility, accountability, and efficiency of organisational resources, increasing the value and focus of outputs of the
organisation (Stewart, 2007). Organised marketing and promotional strategies have also evolved during these two phases, providing SSOs with a tool to both raise revenue from external sources, and to increase membership and participation numbers through greater awareness.

Government has facilitated the increasing professionalism in Australian sport (Westerbeek, Shilbury & Deane, 1995). This has been evident through ongoing and significant increases in public funding from the early 1970s to 1991 (Westerbeek et al., 1995), with significant gains in the annual allotted public funding since then bringing the total of direct government funding to National Sporting Organisations for the financial year 2017-2018 to $133 million (ASC, 2017). State Sporting Organisations also receive direct funding from their respective state governments, with this funding for sport and recreation activities exceeding $1 billion for the first time in 2001, and this has been increasing since (ABS, 2017). Local government contributes to sport and recreation at the local level, which indicates that there has been, and continues to be, a substantial public contribution towards sport in Australia. During this time, the focus and activity regarding performance measures, external funding strategies, accountability and transparency in how SSOs allocated this public funding has been met with mixed results.

The Australian sport system has retained a focus on a traditional, federated approach, where local clubs form the foundation of the system, with regional associations and district sporting bodies overseeing these clubs and providing administrative and governance assistance. Above these district sporting bodies sit state sporting organisations (SSOs) which provide governance and administration assistance to the tiers below, in addition to providing funding opportunities and policy guidance. National sporting organisations (NSOs) are the peak Australian sporting bodies directly linked to international organisations (International Federations) and Australian government agencies including the Australian Sports
Commission (ASC), forming the final tier of the Australian sporting structure. As was identified with state sporting organisations, NSOs are responsible for policy and legislation development, obtaining and effectively utilising public funding, increasing sport participation and managing high performance sport. Other bodies including sport institutes, academies and advocacy groups also contribute to the Australian sporting system, providing a range of services including high performance management, education services, participation opportunities and administration assistance.

The current environment sees Australian sport in a phase defined by reducing levels of government funding, combined with increasing conditions governing usage and accountability (Jolly, 2013; Shilbury & Kellett, 2006). Stewart and Smith (2000, p.8) have referred to this by explaining that Australian sport faces, “a) less public funding at all levels, b) new commercial pressures and opportunities, c) pressure on sport’s community base and infrastructure, and d) growing expectations for service and performance”.

Bayle and Madella (2002), and Winand et al. (2016), indicated that IMC has been an important dimension of State Sport Organisation (SSO) performance, providing a suite of positive benefits including increased revenue, participation, membership, and public awareness. However, a key question exists over whether Australian not for profit sport organisations and Tier Two SSOs use IMC in an efficient manner, thereby fully realising the potential of IMC tools and strategies.

As such, there is no more important time for Australian SSOs to embrace and implement IMC activities and strategies, including frameworks, to ensure effective and efficient use of these tools.
2.1.2. Sport Organisations and Promotion

Sport organisations compete for limited resources and restricted funding (Stier & Schneider, 1999). This raises the expectation that sport administrators must generate resources via external funding and innovative application of new and existing resources. While ‘corporate’ or ‘professional’ sport organisations and leagues have access to a large pool of resources through major corporate sponsorship, gate receipts or broadcast revenues, sports which do not boast access to these resources can often experience marginalisation (Eagleman, 2013). This marginalisation can prevent the organisation from providing the programs and activities it is mandated to offer to the community, and inhibit the organisations efforts to promote the sport it represents.

The need to become more commercially sensitive and marketing aware, requires sporting organisations to maximise their implementation of modern forms of promotion. Promotion can be described as a suite of communication tools which motivate the public to display favourable attitudes and behaviours towards an organisation (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013; Abeza, O’Reilly & Seguin, 2017; Abeza, O’Reilly, Seguin, Nzindukiyimana, 2017; Eagleman, 2013; Belch & Belch, 2015; Finch, O’Reilly, Hillenbrand & Abeza, 2015; Slack & Parent, 2006). It has been suggested to be an important dimension or outcome of organisational performance (Bayle & Madella, 2002), providing a tool to generate external funding as well as communicate and engage internal and external stakeholders.

Increasingly, traditional marketing or communication activities are being modified into their electronic equivalents, with the result being the integration of IMC. Sport organisations, in particular not for profit organisations including NSOs and SSOs, integrate IMC to reach, communicate with, and engage large audiences in a low cost, highly efficient and targeted manner compared to traditional media platforms (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). Due
to its emergent role within sport organisations, there is limited knowledge about the use of IMC in sporting organisations, with practice outpacing theory, leading to the inefficient use of the available tools. While frameworks to describe and analyse traditional promotion approaches in profit and not for profit organisations exist, such adaptations for IMC strategies in not for profit sport organisations are yet to be developed.

2.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: SPORT ORGANISATIONS

Developing an understanding of how ‘non-profit’ sport organisations activate and implement IMC, coupled with strategies to implement, and facilitate the effective use of existing funding, forms the focus of this thesis. By incorporating an organisational performance model to represent the central conceptual framework, functional use of IMC can be evaluated to assist organisations in achieving effective and efficient use of IMC tools and activities.

Within SSO performance literature, the six dimensions of organisation performance have been typically identified as being Institutional, Social Internal, Social External, Economic/Financial, Promotional, and Organisational (Bayle & Madella, 2002). In terms of the importance and role of IMC to SSOs, Winand et al. (2010), Winand et al. (2016), and Bayle and Madella (2002), discuss IMC and promotions as being the most important of the six performance dimensions. The authors suggest IMC strategies and tools provide sport organisations with; (i) the channels to engage with existing consumers; (ii) the ability to reach new potential consumers providing information and interaction opportunities; (iii) the capacity to raise awareness and the profile of the sport and; (iv) the ability to obtain funding through membership and participation fees and government funding.
Strategic IMC can be explained as a systems process model where inputs, throughputs and outputs are identified and subsequently represented diagrammatically. Figure 2.1 presents a representation of this through a collection of integrated elements moving from left to right. The conceptual framework identified that an organisation’s IMC tools and activities, consumer attitudes and behaviours towards this IMC including service quality, relationship quality and consumer engagement, and functional organisational outcomes directly related to the IMC messaging delivered by the sport organisations, support the elements of the systems process model (inputs, throughputs, and outputs). Representing the model in this way has the benefit of providing an uncomplicated view of the concept with a flow from left to right providing a clear pathway of the concept. Additionally, this flow through the related elements provided a structure for the literature review to follow.

Figure 2.1 introduces the chosen basis for the conceptual model. This is represented by a systems process procedure, beginning at IMC activities and tools represented in Section 2.5 with this constituting the inputs of the systems model (developed through Section 2.3 and 2.4). Section 2.6.2 presented Consumer Attitudes to the organisation, focussing on the digital IMC strategies and messaging, and the attitudes relevant to these strategies to SSOs. Section 2.6.2.1 developed Consumer Service Quality, summarised the definition of the concept and related the construct to the perceived consumer expectations of SSO IMC strategies and activities. This allows relationships between consumer attitudes and perceived service quality of the IMC delivered to be outlined. Service Quality is then linked to Relationship Quality in Section 2.6.2.2, which presented where the direct relationship between service quality and relationship quality is examined, again, focussed solely on the digital IMC provided by the participating organisations, and investigated the effects of relationship facilitators and inhibitors. Section 2.6.2.2 also explored the resultant Consumer Engagement Behaviours arising from organisational IMC activities and messaging, and develops these within an SSO
context to uncover relevant behaviours for use within the conceptual framework. Finally, Section 2.6.2.3, Functional Organisational Outcomes, is concerned with the desired goals and aims of SSOs and how they can be achieved through organisational IMC strategies and activities.
Figure 2.1 Expanded Organisation IMC Function Framework.
2.3. UNDERLYING THEORETICAL APPROACHES

2.3.1. Developments in, and the need for, firm foundational theory in sport research

In a related area reviewing social media tools and their use in sport management research, Filo et al. (2015) discuss the lack of, and need for, order regarding the foundation theories used in sport management research. They identified that over half of sport management research articles reviewed in the context of social media and digital communications did not explicitly state a theoretical framework, and that a more rigorous application and discussion of these theories and paradigmatic approach is required to allow a more robust body of knowledge to be created. The authors suggest “incorporating theory into the paradigmatic approach, detailing how the theory guided the research design implemented, and articulating how results and findings derived contribute to existing theoretical knowledge or develop new theoretical knowledge” (Filo et al., 2015, p. 10). As such, an initial stage of investigation is to review appropriate theories from within a range of sport related theoretical approaches to better develop the approach undertaken. The research problem and the context it is found within, lead to the identification of organisational performance, systems theory, the technology adoption theory model, and integrated communication technology adoption model, as the paradigms underpinning this research. Each are now outlined, including their relevance to the current thesis.

2.3.2. Organisational Performance and System Theory

In order to study the IMC approaches of SSOs, theoretical approaches that combine structure, strategy, resources, and goals must be considered. Organisational effectiveness presented a suitable framework to develop. Organisation efficiency and effectiveness have been central topics in the study of organisational performance, with many definitions and
models suggested (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Winand et al., 2010). As stated, Bayle and Madella (2002) indicated that SSOs have six critical dimensions of performance, with one of the most important dimensions being promotion. Organisational performance can be conceptualised in many ways, with the systems model providing an appropriate tool for the investigation of promotion in SSOs.

2.3.2.1. Approaches to Organisation Performance

Measuring organisational effectiveness is a function of measuring multiple criteria and evaluating multiple organisational functions based on varying characteristics (Cameron, 1986; Chelladurai & Arnott, 1985; Frisby, 1986). Overall, four approaches to organisation effectiveness (goal attainment approach, the systems resource approach, the process/internal systems model, and the multiple constituency model) emerge as suitable for investigating IMC. Each has considerable theoretical and practical credibility. The four approaches are summarised below, with goal attainment, system resource and internal process displayed in Table 2.1 and a multiple constituency model defined as a combination of these processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Definition (an organisation is effective when)</th>
<th>Relevance (most suitable when)</th>
<th>Limitations of model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal attainment</td>
<td>The organisation accomplishes its stated goals</td>
<td>Goals are clear, measurable, and timely</td>
<td>Goals are often intangible, fluid, and unrealistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System resource</td>
<td>Organisation obtains resources required</td>
<td>Clear connection between inputs and outputs occurs</td>
<td>Resources from trusteeships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal process</td>
<td>Smooth internal functioning</td>
<td>Clear connection between processes and goals</td>
<td>Connection is not as clear as for profit organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Bayle and Madella (2002); Winand et al. (2010)
**Goal attainment approach**

The goal attainment approach to organisational effectiveness is the earliest, and regarded as the most logical approach, to measure an organisation's effectiveness (Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Price, 1968). It is primarily concerned with the extent to which an organisation can achieve its stated goals (Forbes, 1998). Measures of effectiveness and the extent to which these goals are fulfilled dictate the organisation's effectiveness. This however is the basis of the major limitations of the goal attainment approach, which refers to numerous (too many) goals, conflicting goals, and constantly changing goals (Weese, 1997). Chelladurai & Haggerty (1991) explain that when an organisation's goals are unclear, unstable, and conflicting with each other, it becomes very difficult to measure organisation effectiveness using this approach.

The similarities of the organisations studied, their goals, and how they measure these outcomes, allow the goal attainment approach to organisational effectiveness to be an appropriate tool in the development of a framework for exploring IMC in SSOs. The use of the goal attainment approach allows SSOs to determine the effectiveness of their IMC strategies and activities, to ensure that resources allocated, both public funding and human resources, are utilised effectively.

**System resource approach**

Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) developed the system resource model, and describe effectiveness as the ability of an organisation to extract from its environment, scarce and valued resources. It is focussed on the inputs of an organisation, and how an organisation remains viable through the extraction of the resources used as inputs. As Shilbury and Moore (2006) explain “attracting necessary resources and maintaining a harmonious relationship with the environment is central to the application of the systems model” (p. 10). Using this definition an “SSO would be considered effective based on its ability to obtain significant
funds through corporate and private donations to carry out its programs” (Shilbury & Moore, 2006, p. 9). Chelladurai (1987) posits that since resources are necessary for an organisation to achieve its goals, more resources equate to more goals potentially being achieved by the organisation. Following on from the definition of the goal attainment approach, the increase in goals obtained translates to an increase in effectiveness.

The Crawford report (2009) and Australia’s Winning Edge (2012) both stated the importance of Australian SSOs obtaining external funding to remain viable. Incorporating the systems resource method of organisation effectiveness, alongside developing the framework of IMC use, enables a tool to measure an organisation's effectiveness in funding and managing its IMC processes to be developed.

**Process/Internal Systems Model of organisational effectiveness**

The third model of effectiveness is the Systems or Process model. This model is concerned with the internal workings of an organisation in its process of converting inputs obtained to the desired outputs (Pfeffer, 1977; Steers, 1977). Chelladurai (1987) explains that this approach assumes that there is a clear and logical link between the internal processes and systems and the desired outcomes. The limitations of this approach are that the internal processes need to be identified and assessed.

**Multiple constituency model**

Chelladurai (1987) presents the input-throughput-output cycle discussed in the above three models as part of a systems model of organisations. He synthesises the goal, systems, and process model to provide an approach that considers all the above perspectives of organisational performance in the one model. This synthesis is illustrated in Figure 2.2 with the inputs, throughputs and outputs translated into requirements, activities, and goals/outcomes.
The multiple constituency model provides a holistic view of the organisation's IMC operations. As the research problem is concerned with the inputs required, activities conducted, and outcomes desired by Australian SSO IMC functions, the multiple constituency approach to organisational effectiveness presents as the most appropriate, forming the basis for the conceptual framework. Using the open systems model, Chelladurai (1987) posits that “inputs affect throughputs which affect outputs, which are exchanged with the environment for a return of inputs for the organisation” (p. 39). He outlines that within this model an organisation is dependent on its environment and that all specific elements within the system are inter-related (Chelladurai, 1987).

Figure 2.1 Systems Model of Performance. Source: Chelladurai (1987).

Frisby (1985; 1986), amongst others, demonstrated the suitability of this approach for measuring the organisational effectiveness of SSOs. It is noted that this thesis is specifically concerned with promotion - one distinct area of performance. However, an organisational effectiveness framework was considered, as the elements of IMC (strategy, resources, activities, and outcomes) fit directly into the systems model of organisational performance. Likewise, the EMO model developed by Shaltoni and West (2010) and discussed in detail in chapter four, posits a four-component framework based on philosophical, implementation, initiation, and adoption, all of which can be related to the systems dimensions, strengthening the case for the suggested approach.
2.3.2.2. IMC as a Component of Organisational Performance

Due to the not for profit nature of SSOs, measuring performance is not as straightforward as it is for profit generating organisations. In particular, not for profit organisations are responsible for a wide-ranging group of stakeholders, a multitude of goals and outcomes, and lack easily defined measures such as return on investment, profit or increasing market share. Winand et al. (2010) note that this difficulty in defining, measuring, and managing performance allowed managers of SSOs to avoid focusing and reporting on organisational performance for a number of years. This lack of focus has recently come under intense scrutiny as SSOs are being pressured to justify the funding they receive. Stewart and Smith (2000) highlight that the current stage of Australian sport is managing less public funding, new commercial pressures and opportunities, increased pressures on sports community base and infrastructure, and growing expectations for service and performance.

Organisational performance for not for profit organisations has generally been recognised as a combination of efficiency and effectiveness (Bayle & Madella, 2002). Effectiveness is defined as the capacity of the organisation to achieve its stated goals, and efficiency measures the resources used for real production (Bayle & Madella, 2002). Within SSO performance literature, the dimensions of organisation performance have been typically defined in six areas: Institutional, Social Internal, Social External, Economic/Financial, Promotional, and Organisational (Bayle & Madella, 2002).

Given the increasing pressure on SSOs, the dimension of promotion in particular stands out due to its utility as a tool in addressing the causes of the above pressure. Promotion has been shown to increase organisational revenue, increase member and participant numbers, develop and increase an organisations public perception, and provide and improve communications to existing shareholders (Keller, 2001; Thrassou, 2012). IMC has taken traditional promotion suggested above as an important element of a sport organisation’s
operations and in a service context has added an extra range of benefits through its ability to facilitate a relationship marketing approach to its delivery. Relationship marketing as a managerial concept was first introduced by Berry (1983) in a service marketing context, and has become firmly entrenched as a contemporary marketing approach across a range of industries. Defined by Gronroos (2004) relationship marketing is

A process of identifying and establishing, maintaining and enhancing and when necessary also terminating relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met; and this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises. (p.101)

As such, the goal of relationship marketing is to develop a co-created and customer valued product (Gronroos, 1994) where through this on-going process, long-term relationships are created with the end result of increased consumption of services and products. In addition to this, the relationship marketing process can also strengthen a business’ brand awareness, enhance consumer loyalty, build intimacy with consumers and improve the quality of the product or service being offered (Gronroos, 2000; Stavros et al., 2008).

The emergent function of IMC encompasses all the benefits of traditional promotion, with the additional advantages of reaching a large audience in a cost effective and timely manner. This provides smaller sports with ways to generate revenue and engagement, and to build a competitive advantage if performed well. For these reasons, IMC is essential for organisational performance in SSOs.

2.3.3. Behavioural Intentions Theory

Identifying how attitudes can be utilised to predict behavioural intentions have been the focus of studies based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen, 2002). The theory of reasoned action suggests that a subject’s behavioural actions are determined primarily by
the strength of their intention to perform that specific behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Based on this theory, the attitude of the subject towards a particular behaviour, combined with the social perception of that given behaviour, can be used to predict the subject’s intention to perform the given behaviour. Given this dependence of societal norms to moderate whether a subject’s attitudes towards a behaviour leads to behavioural performance, Ajzen and Fishbein (2000) suggested a new theory where a subject’s behavioural intentions and not attitudes are used to predict actual behaviour.

This theory, referred to as the behavioural intentions theory (TBI), is explained by Ajzen (1991) as behaviour that can be suggested as the direct consequence of intention, as there is a strong relationship between the motivational factors concerned with a subject’s intentions that can and do influence behaviour. This theory posits that the extent of intention indicates the level that the subject is willing to engage in a given behaviour and, additionally, the amount of effort that will be spent on the behaviour. The stronger the behavioural intention, the higher the likelihood of the behaviour being actioned upon and the higher the levels of effort expended on the given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). In the context of this research, the stronger the behavioural intention a member of a sporting organisation has towards participating in a program or activity delivered by the given organisation, the higher the likelihood of that member in engaging in that activity and also engaging in that activity at a higher level or higher time of participation. The behavioural intentions theory also discusses inhibitors or non-motivational factors which can contribute to the relationship between an individual’s behavioural intentions, and the actioning of those. Lack of time, distance of travel to participate in activities, lack of social connections, and financial pressures, can all have a negative effect on the relationship between an individual’s behavioural intentions and the behavioural actions.
Behavioural intentions shown by an individual can both be positive and negative (Burton, 2005; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Positive behavioural intentions can include; saying positive things about the organisation to others; recommending the organisations activities and programs and; having a willingness to pay a premium price to one organisation even given competition from others. Negative behavioural intentions, conversely, can have a detrimental effect on the organisation in question and can include; complaints about the activities or programs (services) provided by the organisation; a decrease in the number of interactions / purchases an individual has with the organisation and; the switch of the interactions / purchases to a competing organisation (Burton, 2005).

Studies have identified the relationships between service quality, consumer attitudes, organisational outcomes, and behavioural intentions (Boulding, Kalra, Staelin & Zeithaml, 1993; Choi, Cho, Lee, Lee & Kim, 2004; Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000). As a result, consumer attitudes and service quality have been modelled as antecedents to behavioural intentions, and functional organisational outcomes have been shown to be a direct result of related behavioural intentions.

2.3.4. Technology Adoption Models

2.3.4.1. Technology Adoption Model

The theory of technology adoption model (TAM) evolved from the theory of reasoned activity to account for the increasing use and importance of information technology (IT) and information systems (IS) in the social sciences (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989). The initial purpose of this model was to provide a tool allowing the forecasting of consumer intentions including adoption and implementation, based on the perceived attitudes towards motivational factors including, ease of use, usefulness, and fulfilment (Davis, 1993). Through a foundation couched in the theory of reasoned activity, and considering the cognitive and
social theories of decision making discussed in the theory of planned behaviour, the
technology adoption model theory has proven useful in a number of social science contexts.
These theories have enabled predictions of consumer behaviours based on perceived attitudes
of the quality of the product or service provided through new or modified technologies to
occur.

As communications technologies have evolved and advanced to become more
consumer focussed, the TAM has also had to evolve to consider the changing cognitive and
behavioural attitudes towards the implementation and adoption of these new media tools,
specifically social media applications.

2.3.4.2. Integrated Communication Technology Adoption Model

Lin et al. (2007) proposed a new model to investigate consumer perceptions and the
resulting intentions. The Integrated Communication Technology Adoption Model (ICTA)
integrates existing studies into a six-component model to study the factors that influence
consumer decisions towards the use of new media activities and tools. The six factors
incorporated in the model provide the basis for researchers to discuss social media adoption
by consumers, but also identify the “potential impact of technology adoption on the social
system, audiences, and user patterns” (Lin, 2003, p. 345).

The six factors are represented as; adoption, system, technology, social, use, and
audience, and a summary of these elements and how they are conceptualised into a working
model is presented in Figure 2.3.
The six factors employed in this model take into consideration both the technology and social communication elements of new media communication and, as such, can be suggested to provide a relevant and appropriate foundation theory for the investigation of IMC strategies and activities when compared to other established models. The ICTA model has enabled a number of studies on related and relevant fields to be undertaken (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), including the electronic marketing orientation of organisations and developments of scale items used to determine consumer attitudes towards IMC services provided by organisations. The ICTA model can be applied to this thesis through integration of a number of the studies being amalgamated to create both the online survey and conceptual framework (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000; Shaltoni, 2006; Shaltoni & West, 2010).
2.4. PROMOTION

The IMC function of SSOs investigated have evolved from traditional forms of promotion, and been adapted and applied to the not for profit sporting context. This section defines promotion and outlines its evolution and application to sport organisations.

2.4.1. Defining Promotion

Promotion (also referred to as marketing communications, and its modern evolution Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)) is the means through which an organisation communicates data about an organisation’s product, place, and price (Thrassou, 2012). Keller (2001) expands on this by stating that promotion or marketing communications are, “the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, incite, and remind consumers - directly or indirectly - about the brands they sell” (p. 819). Promotion provides organisations with an avenue to engage in “dialogue with their consumers and can also be the voice of a brand” (Eagleman, 2013, p. 2). Shilbury et al. (2017) expand on these definitions, explaining that strategic promotional programs need to be developed as a systematic promotions process. This process should be continuous and take the shape of an evaluative measurement loop (Shilbury et al., 2017), where identification of the aims or objectives should lead to the selection and development of tools or activities to be used, and then an assessment of these tools should be undertaken, leading to modifications.

While confusion can be evident between the terms marketing and promotion, there is a distinct difference between them. Promotion is one element of the ‘marketing mix’, a framework first developed in the late 1950s (Borden 1964), and sits alongside the other elements; product, price, and place. The 4 Ps have provided the fundamentals of organisational marketing strategy for a considerable period of time (Shanima, 2012; Worth, 2009).
Although promotion is only one component of the ‘marketing mix’ there is a large amount of literature discussing its prominent place (Belch & Belch, 2015; Eagleman, 2013). Donilcar and Lazarevski (2009) support this in comparing not for profit organisations across Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom stating that “managers indicated that the most important marketing activities are promotional in nature” (p. 19).

Promotion can be described as communications activities that influence the public by informing, persuading, and motivating consumers to display favourable behaviour towards an organisation (Bulut, Radojicic & Nesic, 2012; Masterman & Wood, 2006). As such, the outcomes can include increased awareness, enhanced image, and an establishment of communication providing feedback and generation of sales. Belch & Belch (2015) suggest promotion should be strategic, planned and that the elements should be integrated.

2.4.1.2. Promotion in SSOs

Not for profit organisations are becoming increasingly concerned with market pressures more commonly associated with profit-orientated or corporate organisations. Competition for funding, and the need to obtain additional resources to fulfil objectives, is becoming increasingly pressing, diverting resources away from the organisations primary goals (Andreasen & Kotler, 2003; Dolnicar & Lazarevski, 2009). Robinson and France (2011) illustrate the importance of promotion for SSOs. They bring to light the marginalisation of many not for profit sports in the face of expanding professionalisation in the sporting environment. This marginalisation leads to limited and restricted funding for these organisations (Stier & Schneider, 1999), leading to the expectation that sport administrators are required to generate resources via external funding.

While promotion in the profit landscape is primarily aimed at the purchaser of the product or service (Burton & Howard, 1999), the nature of SSOs dictate that promotional
activities need to be aimed at a wide range of stakeholders (Hall et al., 2003; Worth, 2009). Burton and Howard (1999) declared that the role of promotion in the not for profit sector is critical and needs to be based on “influencing stakeholder beliefs and attitudes, rather than promoting sales” (p. 378), which is the primary aim of promotion in the for-profit sector. This is supported by Worth (2009), who explained that not for profit organisations can change their promotional strategies “in response to information about what customers, clients, or donors need and want, while remaining faithful to its core purposes” (p. 214).

Dolnicar and Lazarevski (2009) discovered that in not for profit organisations, top management responded to questioning in regard to marketing activities, where they stated that the most important activities were identified as promotional activities, namely, fundraising, public relations, and advertising. Furthermore, the same respondents when requested to brainstorm as many marketing elements they thought were appropriate for their organisations, also produced a list headed by promotional activities. In this list, the top three marketing activities were; advertising, public relations, and image building/positioning, which illustrate the importance of promotional activities in the not for profit landscape.

2.4.1.3. Evolution of the Promotions Mix

In order to carry out promotions objectives, organisations will implement a promotional strategy comprising a mix of activities. These elements usually include broadcast, sponsorship, advertising, public relations, and personal selling (Bulut et al., 2012; Masterman & Wood, 2006; Mullin et al., 2000). These elements of promotion have been traditionally reduced to a four-component promotional mix comprised of advertising, publicity, sales promotions, and personal selling (Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2008; Mullin et al., 2000).

Traditionally, this promotional mix provided a comprehensive model for the strategies and activities involved in promotion. Changes in consumer behaviour, both caused and
facilitated by advances in technology, dictate that this model needed, and constantly needs, to be updated. A move away from ‘push communication’ to ‘pull communication’, and from one-way communication (monologue) to two-way communication (dialogue), have shaped the current IMC landscape and led to the evolution of an IMC mix with communication methods including advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct communications, personal selling, and digital marketing communications (Bernoff & Li, 2008; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). As such, the modern IMC mix relevant to this study must highlight; a) the not for profit context of the SSO, and; b) the modern IMC mix inclusive of the evolution.

Four major differences in the promotion of not for profit organisations and for-profit organisations have been developed by Andraesen and Kotler (2008), Waters et al. (2009), and Shamina (2012), and are represented as:

- **Multiple stakeholders** - while for profit organisations market their products to one group only - the customer, not for profits must consider four different groups when designing promotion strategies. Current and future customers, government, staff and volunteers, and the general public all need to be considered in a promotion strategy.
- **Multiple objectives** - again, while for profits have the sole objective of making a profit, not for profits have multiple objectives due to the multiple stakeholders they answer to. These multiple objectives are not always similar and can often be contradictory, increasing the complexity of the promotion strategy.
- **Public scrutiny** - due to the use of public funding and the wide range of stakeholders, not for profits need to be careful with their processes, messages, and information to ensure no issues of dishonesty, ethics, or improper use of public funds arise.
- **Service nature of product** - the products delivered by not for profits differ greatly than those of for profits as they are predominately services. This means they are intangible, perishable, produced and consumed simultaneously, and are heterogeneous.

Kotler (1972), in his research on not for profit marketing, considered the above differences to expand and refine the traditional promotion mix to create a promotional mix for not for profit organisations. He posits that a not for profit promotional mix should contain advertising, publicity, personal contact, incentives, and atmospherics.

Although this revised promotional mix advances the traditional promotional mix by encompassing the unique nature of not for profit organisations, further refinement would be
required. Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy (2008) expanded on Kotler’s (1972) work to create a sport promotion mix. They respected the significance that licensing, and sponsorship have on the current sport landscape and the importance of customer/member relations while devising their sport promotion mix. This evolution has recently been carried into the digital sphere with Shilbury et al. (2017) updating and synthesising a current sports IMC list, illustrating both the evolution from traditional promotion techniques to their contemporary counterparts. Table 2.2 presents a summary of the evolution of the components considered for inclusion in the promotional mix for sport organisations.

*Table 2.2 Evolution of the Promotional Mix for Sport Organisations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mix</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Traditional Promotional Mix            | Borden (1964)                          | • Advertising  
• Publicity  
• Personal selling  
• Sales promotion |
| Traditional Promotion Mix for Not for Profits | Kotler (1972)                  | • Advertising  
• Publicity  
• Personal contact  
• Incentives  
• Atmospherics |
| Sport Promotion Mix                    | Irwin, Sutton and McCarthy (2008)     | • Advertising  
• Sponsorship  
• Public  
• Licensing  
• Personal Contact and Community Relations  
• Incentives  
• Atmospherics |
| Sport Promotional Mix (including new media focus) | Shilbury, Westerbeek, Funk, Quick and Karg (2017) | • Advertising  
• Public relations and publicity  
• Sales promotions  
• Personal selling  
• Direct marketing  
• Interactive marketing and new media  
• Promotional licensing  
• Broadcast strategies  
• Sponsorship |
The evolution displayed in Table 2.2, has led to a contemporary sport promotion mix comprising both modern versions of traditional promotion activities and tools, and new unique activities and tools enabled by recent advances in technology (namely Web 2.0 and principles of interactivity and engagement). Expanding on each component which comprises the list of activities proposed by Shilbury et al. (2017), each component can be described as:

- **Advertising**: a one-way communication tool where an organisation pays someone else to have their product, brand or organisation identified.
- **Public relations and publicity**: technique of determining public attitudes and interests and designing communication strategies using this to draw attention to, or shape attitudes and perceptions towards, a person, product, organisation, or event.
- **Sales promotions**: a short-term activity aiming to provide an incentive to purchase, or to stimulate a short-term or immediate increase in sales.
- **Personal selling**: selling through individual and personal communication, usually over the phone, face to face or through an internet portal.
- **Direct marketing**: one-to-one communication of a personalised message to a consumer, with the purpose of eliciting a direct response or sale. It allows specific targeting of consumers and tailoring of messages to suit these consumers.
- **Interactive marketing and new media**: technologically or digitally enabled tools allowing two-way connections and direct communications between organisations or brands and consumers. These tools include websites, social media, fantasy sport, e-commerce, online communities, and gamification, and are used for information transfer, to increase awareness and enhance image, establish communication, or generate engagement, gain feedback, and generate sales.
- **Promotional licensing**: the “act of granting a second party permission to use a mark, name, symbol or likeness” (Irwin, Sutton & McCarthy, 2008: p. 242). This partnership seeks dual benefits in provision of exposure, revenue for the organisation and its licensing agent, and opportunities to leverage and build the brand equity of the sport.
- **Broadcast strategies**: offer viewers a virtual front-row seat at the world’s premier sporting events and has developed into a business-driven multi-billion-dollar business, where broadcast rights and sponsorship contracts share equal importance with on-field events (Pope et al., 2009).
- **Sponsorship**: is the provision of resources by an organisation directly to an individual, authority or body to enable the latter to pursue some activity in return for benefits which can be expressed in terms of corporate, marketing or media objectives (Pope et al., 2009).

This evolution highlights that while traditional promotion activities still exist, many now exist in different formats, facilitated by technological advances and new and unique IMC tools have emerged. Discussion on these new IMC tools follows.
2.5. DIGITAL IMC AND COMMUNICATIONS

The World Wide Web or Internet is an interconnected system of computer networks spanning the globe, allowing a decentralised method of electronic communication. Its conceptualisation and creation is widely credited to Tim Berners-Lee, who first coined the term Web while proposing an idea for a linked information system to the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) (Belch & Belch, 2015). The proposed system of a decentralised connectivity, as opposed to a hierarchical model that was prevalent at the time, has led to a much more useful and effective communication system. This communications system has facilitated the creation of a responsive and interactive user interface, allowing both the transfer of information but also the co-creation of information between users.

Modern internet technology is changing the nature of marketing and especially communication and promotion (Ruzic et al., 2012). Traditional activities are being modified into their electronic equivalents with new forms of communication evolving. In addition to this, new and unique communications tools such as social media and online communities have been invented as additions to the IMC mix (Abeza et al., 2017; Achen, 2016; Law, Leung & Wong, 2004). The development of the internet has meant that electronic communication has overtaken all other mediums, and individuals can share opinions and information with others faster and easier than before (Bulut, 2012). This has presented consumers with new levels of interactivity and power, and has shaped the way in which organisations need to promote themselves. This is consistent with the findings of Bulut (2012), and Law et al. (2004), where IMC is described as public relations and communications strategy that influences the public by informing, persuading, and motivating consumers to display favourable behaviour towards an organisation.

Bulut (2012), and Law et al. (2004), describe the target of IMC strategies and activities as being ‘the public’ and ‘consumers’. In the context of this research into Tier Two
Australian SSOs ‘the public’ and ‘consumers’ cover a wide range of stakeholder groups all with various, differing, and sometimes conflicting needs (Hall et al., 2003; Winand et al., 2016; Worth, 2009). These stakeholders include members and participants, fans, sponsors, government bodies, staff and volunteers, and the general public. Due to this range of stakeholders and their requirements, any IMC activities and business decisions in general must be agreed upon by all bodies, complicating the strategies and actions of an SSO (Andraesen & Kotler, 2008; Shamina, 2012).

New technologies create opportunities for organisations to establish direct connections with the consumer, facilitating relationships and interaction. This interaction is unlike that required for traditional media, which only allowed one-way and unfocussed communication activities and strategies (Belch & Belch, 2015; Ruzic, 2009). New digital or Web 2.0 technologies facilitate the creation, collaboration, editing and sharing of user generated content (Ruzic et al., 2011). This increased consumer engagement has been shown to positively affect consumers perceptions of organisations, leading to an increase purchasing intent and participation levels (Belch & Belch, 2015).

New digital or Web 2.0 technologies have been suggested to have changed the way people use the internet, with users now evolving from passive users with little interaction, to active users with the ability to engage in conversation and co-create content (Cleary et al., 2006; Duffy, 2008). With no clear definition of what constitutes Web 2.0, it is commonly considered as the second generation of Web-based applications, communities, and activities (Duffy, 2008). It is also described as the read / write Web, where a medium is presented allowing people to collaborate, share information, interact and co-create content and value, closely resembling the original ideas of Web developer Tim Berners-Lee (Richardson, 2000). The technologies and activities differentiating the Web 2.0 from its predecessor include;
social networking sites, e-commerce abilities, blogs, wikis, multimedia sharing services, podcasting, and multi-user virtual environments (Anderson et al., 2006).

The technological advances associated with digital and new media have facilitated the following changes that have led to the transition from traditional to digital IMC (Belch & Belch, 2015; Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer & Johnston, 2009; Ruzic, 2009). The result has been a shift away from ‘push communication’ toward ‘pull communication’, a shift away from monologue towards dialogue, traditional lean-back interactions becoming communications with lean forward interaction, where consumers can quickly turn to other avenues or websites to find information, and a greater focus on interactivity and engagement as part of the communications mix (Shilbury et al., 2017). This shift can be summarised as the ability to facilitate easy collaboration among individuals or groups, and the sharing of knowledge and information between these groups. It illustrates the shift from publisher generated content to user generated content, from information consumption to information creation, and active participation by users (Centeno et al., 2006).

Changes in digital IMC have resulted in a transformation of consumer behaviour facilitated by the emergence of the internet, and the advances in technology associated with it. Apart from allowing the consumer numerous benefits, organisations employing IMC also receive numerous advantages. Ruzic et al. (2012) lists many advantages that digital communication and promotion holds over traditional methods. These include:

- Cost effectiveness and enduring marketing strategies, where the internet offers low cost advertising when compared with costs associated with producing radio and television ads;
- Its large market penetration, with millions of people each day using the internet to search for products and services, with the internet providing a tool allowing businesses to reach huge numbers of consumers;
- Customer relationships formed by using these methods also strengthens the public perception of the organisations employing them;
- Digital content is also timeless. A newspaper or radio ad might only be seen or heard on the day it is published and then it disappears from the public view,
whereas internet advertising remains for years with only slight changes to content required;

- IMC activities are also time saving when compared to traditional media, for example, the use of FAQs and information content online reduces the time required for service information and sales administration;
- Finally, digital IMC also provides real time statistics for measuring success, allowing the performance of communication and promotional strategies to be monitored in real time, enabling changes to be made to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness of the strategy.

The pressures on SSOs to obtain funding and attract or retain members can divert resources, both financial and human, away from the organisations primary goals (Andraesen & Kotler, 2003). The benefits of employing the digital IMC approaches listed above, theoretically enable SSOs to implement activities and strategies more efficiently, without endangering their ability to fulfil their mandate due to the over allocation of resources.

2.5.1. IMC Tools and Activities

The current toolbox of specific IMC activities is illustrated in Table 2.3. A summary of the use of various communication activities in the contemporary sporting landscape is presented, highlighting somewhat, the embryonic stage of academic literature in the area. This list is not exclusive, nor exhaustive, as IMC techniques are constantly being developed, but it does provide a substantial cross section of the current techniques employed by not for profit sporting organisations. Current knowledge of sporting IMC elements is limited due to the recent implementation of these techniques as illustrated in Table 2.3 not including new technology such as Virtual Reality of new evolutions of messaging platforms and content delivery tools including Snapchat and WhatsApp.
Table 2.3 Existing Research in IMC Activities in Sport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMC activity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example of use</th>
<th>Existing research</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Internet based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content (Kaplan &amp; Haenlein, 2010), with Twitter and Facebook being the most predominant.</td>
<td>Reporting of club, league and player news and information in real-time through official and non-official origins.</td>
<td>Abeza et al., 2017; Abeza et al., 2015; Eagleman, 2013; Hambrick &amp; Kang, 2015; Kaplan &amp; Haenlein, 2010; Klosoky, 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online forums</td>
<td>Allow internet communication between fans and organisations offering both one way and two-way communications. Blog marketing- blogs are user created content and provide consumers with fresh and authentic information.</td>
<td>BigFooty.com an Australian unofficial sports forum.</td>
<td>Clavio, 2011; Clavio &amp; Kian, 2010; Frederick et al., 2012; Hambrick &amp; Kang, 2015; Hambrick &amp; Svensson, 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM and database management</td>
<td>The process when client relationships, customer loyalty and brand value are built through marketing strategies and activities. Electronic mail acts in the same way as traditional mail but has enormous advantages in reach, lower costs, ability to be forwarded on, and real-time information exchange.</td>
<td>The use of databases to target advertising to specific groups.</td>
<td>Hutchins 2016; Norman, 2014; Bee &amp; Kahle, 2006.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content marketing</td>
<td>The use of both organisation and user generated content to engage consumers and increase interest in an organisation. Content can be informative, entertaining or a mixture. Viral marketing- is a strategy that aims to use individuals as a means to spread a message, creating an exponential increase of the message’s reach and influence.</td>
<td>Instructional videos, interviews with players and staff, both official and fan generated.</td>
<td>Heere et al., 2013; Ioakamidis, 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website use</td>
<td>Use of new technologies in the form of Web 2.0 to provide an avenue for engagement through interactive content. Web site- the main element of IMC. Without a web site not only are all other IMC activities impossible but a negative image is relayed to the public.</td>
<td>Sport websites offering content and a platform for other IMC activities.</td>
<td>Hutchins, 2016; Ioakamidis, 2010; Turlow, 2009.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadcasting</td>
<td>New technology is allowing cheap and high-quality footage being distributed through internet protocol television and mobile channels to computers and handheld devices (Shilbury et al., 2017)</td>
<td>Live match coverage and highlights produced centrally and shown on internet through YouTube.</td>
<td>Shilbury et al., 2017; Turner, 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>The sales of tickets, memberships, goods, and merchandise by sporting organisations over the internet.</td>
<td>Online stores selling club apparel to fans.</td>
<td>Ebrahimi &amp; Hoseini, 2012; Yin et al., 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamification</td>
<td>The use of game-like mechanics in non-game scenarios to increase engagement in an activity</td>
<td>Tipping competitions, quizzes, and other contests are tools in engaging and interacting with fans.</td>
<td>Heere, 2017; Wysocki, 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy sport</td>
<td>Online consumer activity allowing participants to select and control a team with points scored based on actual game statistics.</td>
<td>AFL Dreamteam and SuperCoach attract over 500,000 participants.</td>
<td>Dwyer, 2011; Karg &amp; McDonald, 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Advertising</td>
<td>Use of the organisations website to promote products and services offered and the selling of internet space to other organisations for revenue. Internet Advertising is using the internet to convey a message through the computer screen. Banner ads, web sites, and e-mails are all common techniques of internet advertising. Affiliate marketing allows web sites to advertise on other web sites and vice versa for compensation. Usually in the form of banner ads on a web site related to the organisation employing it.</td>
<td>Selling advertising space on website to other organisations in the form of banner ads.</td>
<td>Hutchins, 2011; Hutchins &amp; Rowe, 2010; Shilbury et al., 2017.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO, Crowd funding, Auctions</td>
<td>Marketing searches or search engine optimisation/marketing aims to increase an organisation’s visibility on the internet through search results. Crowd funding and online auctions are direct revenue raising activities based on traditional counterparts.</td>
<td>An organisation’s website being top response on a Google search of a keyword.</td>
<td>Ruzic et al., 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.5.2. Integrated Marketing Activities

The list of IMC activities developed and described in Table 2.3, provide an organisation with a suite of tools and activities to achieve their organisational goals and leverage their capacity. Social media, specifically in the form of Twitter and Facebook, and website based activities including content marketing, CRM, and database management, have been identified as the most widely used by Australian SSOs, and also the most effective tools to enhance an organisation’s capacity (Whitburn et al., 2018). These results were observed by Park & Dittmore (2014), however, the utility and use of the other activities summarised in Table 2.3 are increasing in a range of contexts including the sporting landscape (Clavio, 2011; Shilbury et al., 2017).

2.5.2.1. Social Media

In the sporting industry, along with general life, social media is enjoying a meteoric rise in popularity and importance. Social media is now pervasive and plays a significant role in the everyday operation of organisations, along with the everyday lives of individuals. Hausmann & Poellmann (2013) and Nielsen (2014) highlight that over 1.2 billion people, equating to over 80% of the earth’s online population, use social media, with 64% of internet users connecting to social media tools at least once a day. The popularity of social media use has evolved into a “group of internet based applications that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content built on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Kane et al. (2009) extended this description, suggesting that social media displays four main characteristics that differentiate it from other Web 2.0 based activities and tools. These four key elements are: the creation of a digital profile; the ability to facilitate searches while also protecting privacy; the creation of relational ties and;
network transparency. With those definitions in mind, the evolution and use of contemporary social media technologies relevant to the sporting landscape are developed.

Social media use was suggested to be first employed in 1996, with the creation of the networking site sixdegrees.com (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Platforms based on the same or similar tasks have developed into larger and broader based applications. The social media landscape and related applications have evolved into a wide range of diversified tools with some applications falling by the wayside and others experiencing a prolonged period of success. Applications or sites that have delivered unique products or features experienced higher growth and longer popularity (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). This is illustrated by applications such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter reaching high levels of popularity and enjoying a longevity based on the unique functionalities they have provided to the consumer.

Existing studies of relationship marketing in professional sport have highlighted the potential capacity building of these strategies across a range of objectives (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013; Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015; Hambrick & Kang, 2015; Wang & Zhou, 2015) and that social media provides an effective and efficient suite of tools to achieve relationship marketing outcomes (Dixon, Martinez & Martin, 2015; Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015; Newman, Peck, Harris & Wilhide, 2017; Wang & Zhou, 2015). This supports the use of social media by not for profit sport organisations and two of the most widely used in this setting, Facebook and Twitter are outlined.

2.5.2.2. Facebook

With user numbers exceeding 1.59 billion, Facebook is the most popular social media tool of the current suite available (Achen, 2016; Cardoso, Fleury, Feldmann & de Araújo, 2017; Naughton, 2014). Its focus is to provide an application consisting of user-generated content developing the expectations and experiences of users (Bernoff & Li, 2008). This is
achieved through facilitating fan expression either in one-sided declarations or interactions with other fans, athletes and the club (Frederick et al., 2016). Originally a networking platform, Facebook has evolved to include marketing and commercial elements, as well as providing a networking platform for other social media applications. The consumer focus and ability to co-create content has allowed, initially individuals, and now organisations, to converse with a wide audience in a cost effective, timely manner, allowing the creation, maintenance, and enhancement of relationships with various stakeholder groups.

The introduction of the ‘verified page’ by Facebook, in essence a tool to enhance the credibility of content provided by an organisation (Winand et al., 2016), has allowed marketers to create an online community of consumers or possible consumers interested in the organisation. The creation of these communities provides organisations with a communications tool where the relationships are created, maintained, and enhanced through IMC activities. These relationships can provide the organisation with identifiable functional organisational benefits, including positive word of mouth, increased awareness of products and services, and a feedback and evaluation mechanism to assist refining of services provided.

2.5.2.3. Twitter

Twitter, a micro-blogging application where users communicate to each other with messages of a maximum length of 140 (now 280) characters was developed in 2006 and, as stated by the company, aims to provide a “service for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers to one simple question ‘What are you doing’”, and to be an information network that brings people closer to what’s important to them” (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 359). In a business context, the suggestion is that Twitter enables an organisation to create and share ideas and
information instantly, and without barriers commonly found in traditional marketing and communication methods (Belch & Belch, 2015).

Similar to Facebook, this sharing of information to a wide range of consumers or prospective consumers, allows an organisation to create, maintain and enhance relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, through the exchange of information and ideas allowed through conversations carried out in 280 characters or less using the application. These relations enhanced by the co-creation of content through the use of the application can provide functional organisational benefits and outcomes, in line with those experienced through the use of Facebook. This includes increased awareness of the organisation and the services it provides, and an increase in public perception of the organisation. Abeza et al. (2017) expands on this in their netnographical exploration of Twitter use as a relationship marketing tool in a sport context. Here, the authors find through Twitter communications defined as updating, publicising, selling, promoting, appreciating, spreading and servicing, meaningful relationship between the organisation and consumers can be built providing opportunities for communication, interaction and value co-creation, all desired behaviours for sport organisations.

2.5.2.4. Online forums and Web-logs (Blogs)

A web-log or blog refers to a type of website or extension of a website usually maintained by an individual or group, with a primary activity of broadcasting regular entries of commentary, description of events, or other material such as graphics or videos (Anderson et al., 2006). These blog entries, or posts, are organised in a reverse chronological order with the most recent post first. A blog, in essence, is an online journal, and may include text, images, and links to other content. Each post has keywords identified which allows tagging, where a search through all entries on the blog can be undertaken, looking for the relevant
content denoted by the tag. Blogs also allow linking and syndication, where linking allows retrieval and referencing of related material in other blogs, and syndication is the ability of a blog to be delivered on a range of other media tools (Anderson et al., 2006; Kolbitsch & Maurer, 2006). Blogs also allow contributions or comments from users other than the original author, creating an interaction, and allowing the forming of a community of content creators, thereby adding material to the original blog and constructing a conversation based on the original entry.

An online forum is a web-log which facilitates a collection of entries from more than one group or individual based around a common theme or topic. It is moderated, or edited, usually by someone chosen by the organisation, and provides an environment for the creation of a community of likeminded people conversing and interacting through the internet. BigFooty is an example of an Australian based online forum, where Australian Rules football is the central theme or topic, and football fans can post entries on a number of sub-topics related to the game. BigFooty is an unauthorised forum meaning that it is not run and moderated by the Australian Football League (AFL) but is maintained by a group of AFL followers.

2.5.2.5. Consumer Relationship Marketing (CRM) and Database Marketing

In the late 1970s, organisations started to take advantage of the commercial databases they had been collating and applied these to a direct marketing approach (O’Regan, 2003). To target specific individuals and consumer groups with mail orders and catalogues efficiently and effectively, direct marketers required a tool to ensure the ability to reach these groups and also predict response rates to marketing activities. Improvements in technology around the internet and the evolution of digital and social media tools, has led to the increased
importance of database marketing, with most marketers believing the future of marketing will be database related (Belch & Belch, 2015; Zahay, Mason & Schibrowsky, 2009).

Through strategic use of database information, marketers have discovered the ability to create relationships with existing, and would-be consumers, through providing relevant information targeted to the specific characteristics of the consumer segments targeted. This strategic utilisation of database marketing includes four important components (Belch & Belch, 2015; Zahay et al., 2009):

- communicating one to one with existing and prospective consumers;
- remembering consumer specifics including past purchases, lifestyles of the consumer and previous perceptions of service quality;
- customising products and services based on the feedback and information gathered on the individual consumers, and;
- creating individual relationships with each consumer.

The past 30 years has witnessed the evolution of database marketing from a list management tool, into an organisational philosophy focussed on consumer relationships that provides organisations with a tool to: manage consumer communications; provide customised services and products; predict the consumer attitudes and intentions towards these products and; create, maintain, and enhance relationships with existing and prospective consumers.

2.5.2.6. Websites and Web 2.0 Technology

A website in the context of this research indicates a sports organisation website, one which allows a consumer access to sport information, allows the purchase of sporting products and services, and offers the chance to communicate with other sporting fans through related platforms. According to Caskey and Delpy (1999), these sites can then be organised into sections relating to content websites, organisational, club or league websites, commerce websites or gambling websites.
This thesis focuses on the segment containing organisational, league, and club websites and, as such, these can be described as websites offering the consumer information about the sport, including history, rules, regulations and resources on how to participate (as an athlete, official or volunteer), and information on players, team records and schedules and other information. This creates both a general picture of the sport but also a specific focus on the organisation, league, or club in question. The website may also offer e-commerce opportunities, allowing the purchase of activities and products including merchandise, membership fees and event tickets.

Due to the evolution of internet technologies in general and, Web 2.0 tools specifically, sport websites now provide marketing opportunities for organisations to maximise, be it to increase revenue, participation numbers, or to raise awareness of a given sport or team. This is evident in both the theoretical and practical attention being devoted to the understanding of these opportunities, and can be highlighted by the usage trends experienced.

Suh, Ahn, and Pedersen (2013) contend that three main characteristics of websites exist. These characteristics are identified as active user control, two-way communication, and real-time information, and each are significant drivers supporting the popularity of the website in the sporting context.

Active user control can be described as the ability of a user’s voluntary actions to have a positive, direct impact on the experience obtained from interaction with a technology (Liu & Shrum, 2002). It can be explained as the activities undertaken by consumers, including selecting, adding, and modifying content, on a given website (Song & Zinkhan, 2008). Compared to the lack of control consumers have over traditional media messages, website users have the ability to modify and control the messages they both receive and send.
(Voorveld, Neijens, & Smit, 2011). This can be shown through the example of using ESPN’s website with the option to customise it provided through the ‘My ESPN’ window contained on the home page (Suh, Ahn & Pedersen, 2013). This customisation suite allows a consumer to select information they wish to receive regarding different athletes, teams, sports, and information options.

Suh, Ahn, and Pedersen (2013) define two-way communication as the evolution of existing concepts including, reciprocal communication, responsiveness, direction of communication and perceived personalisation. It can be contrasted to traditional media where consumers were unable to immediately and directly respond with opinions or questions regarding the content provided and messages received (Suh, Ahn & Pedersen, 2013; Wu & Wang, 2005). However, social media (and Web 2.0 tools including websites), enable consumers to communicate with others simultaneously, digesting information through several avenues which include message boards, chat rooms, online forums, micro-blogging sites and social networking sites. In a sporting context this allows fans and participants to access other fans, athletes, and organisation staff in real time, and facilitate a conversation between the parties.

In addition to two-way communication, social media also presents the opportunity for consumers to access real-time information. This can be defined as the “simultaneous communication between user’s contributions to a communication and the responses they receive as a result of that communication” (Liu & Shrum, 2002, p. 57). This allows organisations to immediately understand what consumers require, and react to these demands effectively and efficiently (Song & Zinkhan, 2008), presenting a competitive advantage over organisations which do not respond in such a timely manner.
2.6. SERVICE AND PROMOTION AS A RELATIONSHIP BUILDING TOOL

Relationship marketing has been shown to be effective in providing a range of positive organisational benefits desired by not for profit sport bodies, including increasing consumer engagement, positive word of mouth, awareness of the sport, and enhanced public perception (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Hambrick & Kang, 2015; Hambrick & Svensson, 2015). As such, it is suggested that IMC strategies and activities should be designed within a service dominant logic, with relationship management a major consideration (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013; Abeza, O’Reilly & Seguin, 2017; Abeza, O’Reilly, Seguin, Nzindukiyimana, 2017; Eagleman, 2013; Finch, O’Reilly, Hillenbrand & Abeza, 2015). In order to identify and measure the consumer perceptions of IMC within a relationship marketing context, a range of constructs and scale items were derived from existing literature to assemble the conceptual framework, and to develop research questions two, three, four and five. This is outlined within the definitions and operationalisation of the relationship marketing themes employed.

2.6.1. The Concept of Service Quality Under a Service Dominant Logic Perspective

The importance of service quality has facilitated a shift in marketing objectives and techniques into a relationship based outlook. Relationship marketing, introduced as a new marketing paradigm by Gronroos in 1994, shifts the marketing focus from attracting new customers, to activities which concern retaining and maintaining customers. Its aim is to create customer loyalty enabling a stable, mutually profitable, and long-term relationship.

As many marketers move from a traditional goods dominant marketing logic, towards a paradigm based on service relationship marketing, service dominant logic is increasing in importance. Gronroos (1994, p. 4) explains the objectives of relationship marketing as “establishing, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with customers…at a profit, so the objectives of the parties are met…” Improving purchase frequency, decreasing marketing
costs, and protecting existing consumer bases from competition, are all specific outcomes that relationship marketing can provide to an organisation.

A service, or services, are differentiated from a good or product through being characterised as more relevant to behavioural activities than physical attributes (Cubillo, Sánchez & Cerviño, 2006). Thus, a service can be defined as “an act or performance offered from one party to another. Although the process may be tied to a physical product, the performance is essentially intangible and does not normally result in ownership of any factors of production” (Lovelock, 2001, p. 3). Lovelock (2001) also explains the four core characteristics of services as being intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and inseparability of consumption and production. Understanding these four core characteristics is vital in developing marketing strategies based on service provision and, as such, theories and frameworks employed to investigate services and service relevant marketing themes need to be based on, and developed, from these four characteristics (Kotler & Fox, 1995).

The intangible nature of a service is suggested to be the fundamental characteristic that differentiates a service from a product (Bateson, 1979). The intangibility of a service refers to the imaginary nature of its being (Liechty & Churchill, 1979). This imaginary nature is explained by services being reliant on social interactions, experiences, and attitudes, and being only time dependant. Products, alternatively, are tangible and clearly exist both in time and place, and are not dependant on social interactions, experiences, and attitudes to exist. The IMC strategies and activities employed by sporting organisations are clearly intangible, and hence constitute a service as they only exist in time, not place, and are defined by the social interactions, experiences, and attitudes of the consumers.

Heterogeneity can be defined as the sameness or consistency of a product or service (Bateson, 1979). Due to the individual social interactions, experiences and attitudes involved
in the consumption of a service, every transaction with a consumer will be different. As such, it cannot be said to display any heterogeneity. Manufactured, mass produced goods have a high level of sameness or consistency and thus a high level of heterogeneity. A single tennis ball for example is almost impossible to distinguish from others within a collection from the same make and model, whereas the experiences of two individuals participating in or attending a sporting event will be completely different based on their personal experiences and value drawn from the event.

Perishability refers to the characteristic of the service which makes it impossible to store and use when required (Berry, 1985). Very strongly tied to inseparability, perishability requires the concurrent consumption of the service as it is produced, and due to the social interactions involved in the consumption of the service, the perishability of the service does not allow storage or warehousing for further use at a given date. In a sporting context this can be illustrated with the example of a live sporting event. The live sporting event due to the social interactions, experiences and attitudes that create the consumer experience, exhibits a strong perishability characteristic. The sporting event cannot be stored or put away for future consumption and this consumption is simultaneous to its production.

Inseparability describes the simultaneous consumption and production which occurs in the majority of services (Gronroos, 1978). As opposed to goods which are usually manufactured / produced, stored, purchased, and then consumed, services are defined by the concurrent production and consumption of the offering. In a sporting context a tennis ball, as a product, follows a normal production and consumption pathway as displayed in any factory anywhere around the world. The ball is produced, then stored and shipped to a retail store, where it can again be stored before being purchased and then consumed at any following time. This differs to a sporting service. Participation in a live sporting activity for example,
requires consumption to be simultaneous to the production (i.e. as soon as the sporting activity commences, participation commences, leading to concurrent production and consumption of the sporting service).

2.6.2. Measuring Service Quality and Its Outcomes

The conceptual framework defining this thesis is derived from several proven models measuring relationship marketing functions and effects within a sport context. These constructs are introduced, and their relevance is discussed. The scale items and measures used to develop these constructs were identified, allowing an overview of the elements used to derive the constructs to be outlined. Full definitions and the process of operationalising these scale items into constructs are presented in Chapter Five and Six, as the initial scale items involved in the investigation required a validity and reliability testing process undertaken using factor analysis techniques. The constructs developed, and scale items tested were: Experiential Benefits (examined in Section 5.2.2), Functional Benefits (Section 5.2.3), Satisfaction (Section 5.2.4), Relationship Quality (Section 5.2.5) and Behavioural Intentions (Section 5.2.6). The scale item refinement carried out in these sections is outlined in Tables 5.1-5.5.

In addition to the constructs identified, facilitators and inhibitors are identified, which may influence the consumer perceptions measured. For example, lifestyle and demographic factors may impact on the relationship between consumer attitudes and consumer behaviours. A lack of leisure time, excessive distance to the activity, and prohibitive costs, may inhibit favourable consumer behaviours. Alternatively, facilitators such as family history, proximity to facilities, and excess leisure time, might facilitate favourable consumer behaviours. While not explicitly covered in the following sections, these facilitators and inhibitors should be noted, given the impact they may have on consumers’ experiences.
2.6.2.1. Service Quality

Service quality is considered to be one of the most important topics regarding marketing practices and, as such, one that has been researched extensively. Pérez, Abad, Carrillo & Fernández (2007) explains that not only has the conceptualisation of the concept been studied, but five other areas of investigation have been undertaken. These areas, concept and nature of service quality; measurement; strategic implications; effect of consumer behaviour and; how to improve service quality, have led to the concept of service quality being linked to improving business performance (Van der Wiele, Kok, McKenna & Brown, 2001), productivity (Keiningham, Perkins-Munn, Aksoy & Estrin, 2005), competitive advantage (Gronroos, 2001), and advantageous consumer behavioural intentions (Cristobal, Flavián, & Guinaliu, 2007; Olorunniwo, Hsu & Udo, 2006). Service quality, however, is difficult to define, due to the heterogeneous nature of services, meaning that individual experience of services differs significantly from one consumer to the next.

Consumer attitudes can be measured with psychometric tools including questionnaires covering relevant items and concepts. Table 2.4 illustrates the existing consumer attitude measurement scales to be adapted and utilised in this thesis, to measure consumer perceptions towards organisational IMC function. These scales provide the core questions for the consumer questionnaire to be distributed, enabling data collected to be applied to the conceptual framework to prove the existence of, and measure the strengths of the relationships proposed in the framework. Table 2.4 below provides an example of the constructs and scales defined and scale items developed and reported on in Chapter Five. All scales and items generated are discussed in the relevant sections within Chapter Six with the table presenting refinement process displayed in Table 5.1.
Table 2.4 Examples of Service Quality Scales and Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale and Author</th>
<th>Scale Definition</th>
<th>Sample Items/Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Experiential Benefits**  
Adapted from Park & Kim (2000) | A measurement scale addressing consumer perception of the experience benefits achieved from using an organisation’s IMC activities and tools | • The social aspects of SSO X IMC tools/pages are important to me.  
• On SSO X IMC tools and pages I get to know other people who are interested in this organisation. |
| **Functional Benefits**  
Adapted from Park & Kim (2000) | A measurement scale addressing consumer perception of the functional benefits achieved from using an organisation’s IMC activities and tools. | • The information provided by SSO X IMC tools/activities are valuable.  
• The information provided by SSO X IMC tools/activities are useful. |
| **Information quality**  
Adapted from Hur, Ko & Valacich (2011) | A measurement scale addressing the consumer’s perception of an organisation’s quality of information provided by its IMC tools and strategies. | • SSO X IMC is a very useful source of information.  
• Information contained on SSO X IMC tools/pages is rich in detail. |
| **Interaction Quality**  
Adapted from Hur, Ko & Valacich (2011) | A measurement scale addressing consumer’s perception of an organisation’s quality of interaction provided by its IMC tools and activities. | • I can learn something valuable by interacting with other members on SSO X IMC tools and pages.  
• I can count on SSO X IMC managers to be friendly. |

Service quality arises from a comparison of what customers feel a company should offer (i.e. their expectations) with the company’s actual performance (Berry, 1985; Gronroos, 1982). Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry (1985) posit that delivering quality service is considered to be an essential strategy for success in a competitive business environment. Service quality is one of the most researched topics covered in marketing research, and these
studies have included the concept and nature of service quality, the measurement of service quality, the strategic implications of service quality, its effects on consumer behaviour, and also how to improve it (Perez et al., 2007). Service quality has been suggested to provide an organisation with positive outcomes in the shape of competitive advantage (Parasuraman et al., 1988), financial performance (Rust, Zahorik & Keiningham, 1995), and customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Cronin & Taylor, 1992).

Due to services being intangible, consumers assess quality subjectively. This leads to a process where an accurate measure is required to identify individual perceptions of quality. As such, service quality is relevant to the SSO context as the lack of resources and media coverage available rule out numerous traditional methods of attaining membership numbers and external revenue. The unavailability of these methods makes the retention and maintenance of existing members, and promotion through word-of-mouth avenues, important tools for SSOs (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Hambrick & Kang, 2015; Hambrick & Svensson, 2015). The measurement of, and strategies focussing on providing a high-level service quality, provide SSOs with a tool to overcome the lack of traditional marketing avenues, and these mechanisms support the retention and attraction of members. Therefore, questions investigating consumer perceptions of service quality of SSO IMC strategies and activities were considered.

Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011), developed and quantified a structural model of the relationships between online sport consumption attitudes and sport consumers perceptions of service quality. Measurement scales were developed to measure consumer perceptions of the quality of a sport related website. Scale items investigated the relationships between the quality of information provided from the website, the interaction allowed, and the quality of
the website design, the system quality, and the amount of fulfillment consumers gained from using the website. These items were shown to have a strong, direct link to service quality with the structural model proven to be valid.

A similar study carried out by Park and Kim (2000) measured the role of social network websites in developing consumer brand relationships, where scale items included experiential and functional benefits, and were shown to have a significant positive effect on relationship quality. This approach provided a method to investigate the relationships between the IMC function, including measurable scale items with which to test consumer views on service quality.

A review of literature posits service quality as perceived by consumers is focused on a range of elements including the quality of the information and interaction provided, usefulness and security of the system and the design of the IMC platforms, and finally the fulfilment achieved through consumption of IMC messages (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Magnusen, Kim & Kim; 2014; Park & Kim, 2000). These studies extend on the SERVQUAL instrument developed by Parasuraman et al. (1988) who proposed five dimensions of service quality in; reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibility. SERVQUAL has been applied to a number of online organisational settings, however does not account for characteristics such as website quality, entertainment quality and responsiveness to information requests (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011). SERVQUAL has been adjusted to fit a sport context in a number of studies where constructs and scale items have been refined to reflect the characteristics of sport consumption (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Ko & Hur, 2005) as such, an extension on the SERVQUAL tool proposed by Ko and Hur (2005) and including service quality sub-dimensions of functional benefits (information, interaction, design, system
and fulfillment) and experiential benefits was adopted and refined for use in this investigation.

2.6.2.2. Relationship Quality

Relationship quality as a concept, has been defined by Palmatier et al., (2006) as the “overall assessment of the strength of a relationship, conceptualised as a composite or multidimensional construct capturing the different but related facets of a relationship” (p. 138). This definition was developed further within a sporting context by Kim and Trail (2011) who highlight five specific benefits organisations achieve from an increased level of relationship quality with consumers:

1. Relationship quality can be employed as a tool to diagnose problems in the relationship between the organisation and its customers, and as such can be a useful tool to solve these problems;
2. It can be used to assess the effectiveness of a relationship marketing campaign;
3. Relationship quality can be used as a conceptual platform for creating various relational constructs;
4. Using a valid and reliable measurement tool it can be used to differentiate between successful and unsuccessful relationships, and;
5. Using a psychometrically sound measurement tool, relationship quality could be used to assess the customer equity of an organisation.

Gummesson (1999) identified relationship marketing and relationship quality as a major paradigm shift from the late 1980s replacing transaction marketing. Gronroos (2004) expanded on Gummesson’s (1999) findings to highlight the importance of interactions, relationships and networks as elements of relationship marketing. This approach suggested three critical components of a successful relationship management strategy (Abeza et al., 2017; Abeza & O’Reilly, 2014). This was presented as a three stage integrated framework. Initially, a planned communication process facilitates the development and enhancement of relationships. This is followed by an interaction process where small interactions or acts lead to episodes which collectively form sequences which then combine to form the relationship
(Holmlund, 1997). Finally, a value process emerges where products and services are aligned
to the needs of the consumers and value is transferred between the parties and also created
through the ongoing interactions. As such, the goal of relationship marketing is to develop a
co-created and customer valued product (Gronroos, 1994) where through this on-going
process, long-term relationships are created with the end result of increased consumption of
services and products. In addition to this, the relationship marketing process can also
strengthen a business’ brand awareness, enhance consumer loyalty, build intimacy with
consumers and improve the quality of the product or service being offered (Gronroos, 2000;
Stavros et al., 2008).

Therefore, in the context of SSOs, where many methods of member and revenue
attraction and retention are not available or applicable, relationship quality can provide SSOs
with an important tool to attract and retain members and to enhance these relationships. The
relationship quality measures employed in this study are summarised in Table 2.5.

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**Table 2.5 Examples of Relationship Quality Scales and Items**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale and Author</th>
<th>Scale Definition</th>
<th>Sample Items/Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Reciprocity      | Internalised beliefs and expectations about the balance of obligations in a relationship. | • This organisation always pays me back when I do something extra for it.  
• This organisation gives me back equivalently what I have given them.  
• This organisation constantly returns the favour when I do something good for it. |
| Cialdini & Goldstein (2004); Mavondo & Rodrigo (2001); Oliver (1999) | | |
| Loyalty          | A commitment to repurchase from a brand despite external factors. | • I will distribute positive word of mouth about this organisation.  
• I will recommend this organisation to others. |
| Dick and Basu (1994); Hollebeek (2011); Oliver (1999); Samuelsen & Sandvik (1997) | | |

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The consumer engagement behaviours presented in Table 2.5 were drawn from an extensive literature review across a number of marketing and management fields (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004; Anderson & Narus, 1990; Hollebeek, 2011; Stern 1997). Other behaviours such as self-connection, partner quality, interdependence and nostalgic connection were also considered, but due to a lack of theoretical or empirical justification particularly in a sporting context were not included for this research (Kim & Trail, 2011).

### 2.6.2.3. Consumer Behavioural Intentions and resulting Functional Organisational Outcomes

The roots of consumer engagement lie in the expanding domain of relationship marketing. Patterson et al. (2006, p. 2) define consumer engagement as “the level of a customer’s physical, cognitive and emotional presence in their relationship with a service organisation”. Hollebeek (2011) supports this with the view that consumer brand engagement is “the level of a customer’s motivational, brand-related and context-dependent state of mind

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>An exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to justify use of resources to maintain it.</th>
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</table>
| Amine & Smith (2009); Farrell & Rusult (1981); Porter et al. (1974) | • I am committed to this organisation.  
• I am devoted to this organisation.  
• I am dedicated to this organisation. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>One party’s belief that its needs will be fulfilled by actions of another.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Anderson & Narus (1990); Morgan & Hunt (1994); Hollebeek (2011) | • I trust this organisation.  
• This organisation is reliable.  
• I can count on this organisation. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Familiarity, closeness, and openness to partners.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Aaker, Fournier & Brasel (2004); Hollebeek (2011); Stern (1997) | • I feel very familiar with this organisation.  
• I know a lot about this organisation.  
• I feel as though I really understand this organisation. |
characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural activity in brand interactions” (p. 6).

Relationship quality and consumer engagement behaviours outlined above have been shown in numerous studies to be linked directly to behavioural intentions or functional organisational outcomes (Bee & Kahle, 2006; Hambrick & Kang, 2015; Hambrick & Svensson, 2015; Magnusen, Kim & Kim; 2014). It is important, practically, and theoretically, to identify the relationships between these behaviours and organisational outcomes, as little existing knowledge is available on the relationships between SSO organisational outcomes or goals, and consumer engagement behaviours. Therefore, providing organisations with a framework of which engagement behaviours to focus efforts on to achieve specific outcomes is of practical importance to them. IMC strategies are carried out to fulfil a determined set of objectives. These ‘desired outcomes’ or ‘goals’ vary between organisations but fall into the same basic categories. Winand, Zintz, Bayle & Robinson (2010) outlines these as strategic objectives directly related to organisational performance. The findings are supported by earlier work from Bayle and Madella. (2002). Objectives of a promotion strategy for an SSO are:

1. To attract members;
2. To develop members loyalty;
3. To spread a positive image of their sport in the media to the audience;
4. To spread a positive image of their sport to members;
5. To improve the spread of the internal communication to members;
6. To obtain financial resources and;
7. To improve non-sport services provided to members.

Promotion can be described as communications activities that influence the public by informing, persuading, and motivating consumers to display favourable behaviour towards an organisation (Bulut et al., 2012; Masterman & Wood, 2006). These objectives identified by

The objectives above can also be categorised into four groups depending on the goals or aims of their use. These four are communication, engagement, viewership, and revenue generation. General marketing knowledge supports these objectives as promotional aims. Belch and Belch (2015) state that the aims of promotional strategies should be based on communication in the form of raising awareness or enhancing perception of a product or service, and produce sales based or revenue raising outcomes. This is supported by findings of Kim and Trail (2011) who propose desired consumption behaviours of a sport organisation to include; the spread of positive word of mouth, an increase in the amount of media produced by the sport to be consumed, an increase in the sales of licensed merchandise and an increase in the game attendance. Positive word of mouth and an increase in media consumed fit Belch and Belch’s (2015) aims of raising awareness and enhancing perception of the sport or club and likewise an increase in merchandise sales and game attendance supports the aims of a sales based or revenue raising approach.

The not for profit nature of SSOs, and the current move to the digital space, means that consumer engagement is very relevant to address. Attitudinal and behavioural changes through stakeholder interactions and relationships are an important IMC objective for an SSO. In the current context of Tier Two Australian SSOs the four most pressing functional outcomes in line with current literature and supported by interviews with the participating SSOs are, increasing participation, revenue, awareness, and brand perception (Whitburn et al., 2018).
2.7. EXISTING MODELS AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In addition to the studies and models used to provide constructs and scale items for the conceptual framework, previous work in the Australian sporting environment provided relevant outcomes applicable to this thesis (Whitburn et al., 2018). An overview of the digital promotions work carried out by Australian NSOs was the focus of the previous research and the findings of the investigation and the framework developed from those findings were transferred and adapted to this study of Australian SSOs. The previous findings are presented and an explanation of how these findings are adapted for use in the current thesis on IMC in Australian SSOs is developed.

2.7.1. Australian NSO Attitudes and Acceptance of IMC

Previous research investigated the e-promotion and IMC practices in Tier Two Australian NSOs (Whitburn et al., 2018). Not only did this research provide theoretical knowledge based on the literature review, and the conceptual framework derived, but the organisational attitudes towards digital communications in the Australian sporting landscape were investigated.

Whitburn et al. (2018) developed five research questions to investigate how Tier Two Australian NSOs define IMC, their philosophy towards it, what activities Australian NSOs identify as IMC activities, the capabilities required to carry out these activities, and the outcomes sought from these activities. The investigation of Tier Two Australian NSOs illustrated both the strengths and weaknesses of the proposed framework. While the inputs (resources), throughputs (activities) and outputs (outcomes and goals) provided an accurate representation of the organisations studied, the systems process proposed was not representative of the full range of how the NSOs linked these components together through actions, attitudes, or behaviours. The direction in which the process operates and the lack of
additional inhibitors and facilitators outside of the inputs and resources proposed, differed between the conceptual model proposed and the data collected.

The conceptual framework from Whitburn et al. (2018) evolved from an Inputs – Throughputs – Outputs concept into the final framework shown in Figure 2.4. EMO and IMC philosophy were seen to affect the resources and capabilities required or possessed by the NSOs, and so were separated from being considered as part of the resources component into a separate category termed philosophy. Inputs reflect key resourcing aspects that are important to the NSO such as finance, people, support stakeholders, policies and knowledge that can assist an organisation in performing IMC tasks. Throughputs reflect the mechanisms that can be employed to support delivery of IMC and incorporate those technologies being widely used such as social media, while outputs are communication, engagement, viewership, and revenue generation.

The conceptual framework developed by Whitburn et al. (2018) presented a systems process model being integrated with an e-marketing orientation model, suggesting that sport organisations are in need of gaining a better understanding of their IMC practices and its resulting impact on consumers.
Figure 2.4 Components of IMC framework for Tier Two Australian NSOs
The framework in Figure 2.4 presents the first step in the systems process model of inputs, throughputs and outputs and is used as the starting point to apply this process further to the relationship marketing constructs. Building on this and incorporating findings from the literature review an initial framework is proposed in Figure 2.5 to be adapted to provide a measurement tool to investigate the consumer perceptions of the IMC services delivered by the participating organisations.

*Figure 2.5 Initial framework based on findings of literature review.*

The framework in Figure 2.5 facilitated the development of hypotheses, summarised below, based on the research questions posed in Chapter One, and these are further developed, addressed, and discussed in Chapter Seven.

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Investigating the strategies and activities of Australian SSO IMC functions and the resulting attitudes, relationships, and behaviours, illustrates whether the IMC function delivered by these organisations is effective and efficient. Figure 2.1 supported the overarching research question stated as:

*Is there a disconnect between consumer expectations and organisation IMC functions in Tier Two state sporting organisations and does a gap or disconnect exist between IMC delivered by Australian sport organisations and best practice methods suggested in literature?*

This overarching research problem is a function of associated research questions posed within the conceptual framework presented in Figure 2.1. Each of these associated research questions reflects one of the components in the conceptual framework, and for the basis for analysis. These questions are stated as:

**Organisation IMC:** *RQ1. What digital communication/IMC strategies are adopted and implemented by Tier Two Australian SSOs, and what is their digital orientation?*

**Consumer Attitudes:** *RQ2. What are the consumer attitudes to the IMC strategies provided by Australian SSOs and what service quality of these strategies are perceived by these consumers?*

**Service and Relationship Quality:** *RQ3. a) Is service quality directly linked to consumer relationship quality within Tier Two Australian SSOs? b) Do other factors (inhibitors, facilitators, mediators) exist, and if so, what is the impact they have on service quality?*

To address this research question the following hypotheses are developed and applied to the framework and data comprising this investigation.
Hypothesis 1: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction

Hypothesis 2: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 3: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction

Hypothesis 4: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 5: Satisfaction has a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Consumer Engagement Behaviours: RQ4. What consumer engagement behaviours does this relationship quality facilitate?

Functional organisational outcomes: RQ5. What functional organisational outcomes result / are achieved through these consumer behaviours?

Four hypothesis were proposed and explored in this investigation to provide further conversation regarding Research Question 5.

Hypothesis 6a: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Hypothesis 6b: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Hypothesis 6c: Satisfaction has a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions
Hypothesis 6d: Relationship Quality has a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Through the investigation of these research questions the overarching research aims of this study; identifying disconnects between actual IMC delivered and consumer expectations, and suggested best practice will be addressed.

2.8. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Two introduced a range of relevant fields and contexts to develop the proposed conceptual framework. Areas of research covering service dominant logic, consumer engagement, consumer behaviour and attitudes, service and relationship quality and organisational performance were researched, and the resultant knowledge was used as the foundation for development of the framework. An overarching research problem and the specific aims of this investigation were then drawn from the concepts and theory provided in the literature review, enabling the formulation of the research sub-questions posed.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

A mixed methods approach was employed to address the overarching research problem. Three Australian SSOs were investigated using a case study approach where within-case and across case findings were uncovered. Initially, a qualitative semi-structured interview process was employed, to identify the strategies and philosophies regarding IMC in SSOs. This supported the development of Research Question 1 (RQ1). Quantitative analysis using a range of statistical tools including exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to test the scale items followed. Accomplished measurement models were developed and tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) tools, and these measurement models formed the basis for supporting the conceptual model. The framework addressed Research Questions 2-5 (RQ 2 – RQ5), focussing on the relationships between consumer attitudes and behaviours and functional outcomes.

3.2. RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research paradigms are defined as both “a set of propositions that explain how the world is perceived” (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 38) and as “linked assumptions about the world…shared by a community of scientists investigating that world” (Deshpande, 1983, p. 101). They provide researchers with a framework in which to conduct their investigations and to guide the data collection process. As noted in Table 3.1, four fundamental paradigms are available for the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); positivism, post positivism, critical theory, and constructivism. All four paradigms have different strengths and limitations and uses.
Table 3.1 Basic Beliefs of Qualitative Inquiry Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Positivism</th>
<th>Post positivism</th>
<th>Critical Theory</th>
<th>Constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontology</td>
<td>Naïve realism- ‘real reality’</td>
<td>Critical realism- ‘real reality’ but imperfect</td>
<td>Historical realism-shaped by social, political, and other values</td>
<td>Relativism-constructed realities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td>Objectivist-true findings</td>
<td>Objectivist-critical tradition-finds probably true</td>
<td>Transactional-subjectivist. Value mediated findings</td>
<td>Transactional-subjectivist. Created findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Experimental, verification of hypotheses</td>
<td>Modified experimental, falsification of hypotheses</td>
<td>Dialogic/dialectical</td>
<td>Hermeneutical/ dialectical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Lincoln & Guba (1985)

When selecting the appropriate research paradigm, the research problem and questions need to be consulted to identify the aims, appropriate methods, and nature of the data to be collected. The research paradigm selected for use is identified and justified.

3.2.1. Choice of Research Paradigm

The aim was to explore the IMC function delivered by sport organisations, and the resulting consumer perceptions associated with these functions. As such, an in-depth exploratory study in an area of little existing knowledge was identified. Existing literature and previous work have identified gaps or disconnects between consumer and market needs and the IMC function delivered by Australian sporting organisations. A lack of in-depth knowledge of the IMC function in Australian sport organisations has been suggested as the reason for this disconnect, with the lack of knowledge leading to ineffective and inefficient IMC strategies and activities being implemented.

SSOs need to satisfy many divergent stakeholder groups, often with competing or opposing objectives, and as a result, expectations of the organisations promotion techniques
including IMC are complicated, fluid and developing due to consumer pressures and technological advances. Due to this area of study being in its developmental stage, the IMC function and the consumer perceptions are not tangible and difficult to quantify, allowing the positivism paradigm of research inquiry to be eliminated. Of the remaining three paradigms, post positivism or realism provides the most suitable research method. Critical theory and constructivism require a researcher focus or a subjective view of the issues being investigated, which contrasts with the aims of this research where only organisation and consumer perceptions are the focus. A realist methodology of the investigation allows the development of an objective view of the participants, both consumers and sports bodies, the IMC function, and the relationships between them. Realism also allows multiple forms of data to be employed from various sources, providing a range of perspectives of the same issue or theme in line with the overarching research aims. Realism opens up the use of a number of data collection and analysis tools.

3.2.2. Nature of Research: Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research

With the founding research paradigm decided upon, and the resulting ontological and epistemological perspective identified, the next stage of research methodology is the choice between qualitative research design and quantitative research design. The realist paradigm selected leads to the requirement that methodological approaches aim to address the relevant elements in their natural settings in order to uncover the behaviours displayed and the meanings and purposes behind those (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The realist research paradigm allows for both qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches being employed. Qualitative research is commonly used to build a holistic view of the research inquiry and uses a naturalistic approach to understanding the research problem in the given context (Patton, 1990). Quantitative research can operationalise
the concepts deduced from theory (Baker & Foy, 2008), and to test relationships and hypotheses derived, placing emphasis on numeric data to achieve generalisable conclusions (Saunders, 2012).

3.2.3. Mixed Method Research

Considering the research problem(s) identified, it is appropriate to choose a research process including both research methodologies, resulting in the employment of a mixed methods approach. A mixed methods approach to business and management research is becoming increasingly common, as researchers become more aware of the benefits of utilising both methodologies within a single study (Creswell, 2009).

Bryman (2006) highlighted five relevant reasons for combining both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in social science research:

- Triangulation – which provides corroboration of results to support findings. Triangulation concerns the use of a number of sources of information and data collection methods to ensure reliability and validity of data collected. In this investigation triangulation was provided by exploring perspectives from both an organisational and consumer point of view. This added validity to the findings and implications drawn from the study as they took in a ‘whole field view’ of the issue.
- Complementarity – which identifies results obtained from one methodology are achievable through use of the corresponding method. This also adds clarification from one stage to the next. During this study common themes identified in the qualitative component were used to create scale items that led to the survey tool, which provided data for the conceptual framework to be formed allowing the research questions to be addressed.
- Development - is the use of one methodology by the researcher to build upon findings of the other. This study used qualitative findings from interviews with staff to inform and develop scale items which formed the basis of constructs and the conceptual framework employed.
- Initiation - involves identifying paradoxes and perspectives of frameworks by employing one methodology to analyse the results obtained through using the alternative method. Here, the attitudes of the SSOs identified through qualitative methods were analysed and interpreted through creating a quantitative survey tool to measure IMC perceptions of the market.
- Expansion - is the facilitation of widening the scope of enquiry provided to the researcher through the use of both research methods (Bryman, 2006; Creswell, 2009). This investigation experienced expansion at the hands of a mixed
methods process. Through initially identifying attitudes of three SSOs, the scope of the study widened to create a framework which can be employed to measure similar organisations in sport and not for profit contexts.

In addition to these reasons, Bryman (2006) explains that a mixed methods study can utilise both research methodologies at a number of stages of the project, including the formulation of research questions, throughout the sampling process, during data collection and data analysis. The most common stages where both qualitative and quantitative methods are used, is at the data collection and analysis stages, where the distinguishing characteristics of the methods allow a holistic view of the research problem to be determined. This then allows for the employment of one, or more, of the five reasons for combining methodologies outlined above.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The mixed methodology approach enables for both perspectives to be utilised to obtain a better understanding of the research problem and the related research questions. A sequential technique, where one is carried out after the other, was employed. Initially, a qualitative investigation of organisational implementation and attitudes regarding IMC was undertaken to aid the formation of the online survey employed in the quantitative element of the investigation. This was followed by employing quantitative methods to uncover sport member attitudes and behaviours towards IMC strategies and programs that are provided by the investigated sporting organisations. Figure 3.1 identifies the process undertaken. An initial exploratory phase involving literature review and document analysis was followed by interviews with key stakeholders. This initial process enabled the construction and development of survey items which were then applied to consumers involved with the SSO.
The overall approach was part of a larger case analysis into the IMC practices and approaches of SSOs.

**Figure 3.1 Overview of Research Design**

### 3.3.1. Case Studies

Case studies represent an appropriate research tool when the research aims to refute or extend existing concepts, particularly when presented with observational data (Parkhe, 1993; Stake, 1995; 2013). A case study approach is supported within the realist research paradigm. Yin (2006) defines a case study as, “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (p. 13), while Hartley (2004) adds that to explore little known processes, behaviours, or events in context case studies are ‘tailor made’.
The purpose of a case study is to gain a ‘thick description’ or in-depth knowledge of a situation, and the meaning of this situation for those involved (Merriam, 1998). With a case study, interest is in the process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, and in discovery rather than confirmation (Creswell et al., 2003; Stake, 2013; Yin, 2006).

While the number of case studies undertaken to investigate sport organisations, and specifically, Australian sport organisations is limited, some previous work has been undertaken focused on sport organisations. Examples of case study use in these central areas include the comparison of organisation effectiveness models (Chelladurai, 1987), a comparison of Canadian sports organisations (Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991), the organisational effectiveness of Hellenic SSOs (Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000) and the effectiveness of Australian Olympic sporting organisations (Shilbury & Moore, 2006).

Case studies contribute to existing knowledge, or create new knowledge through making comparisons, looking for similarities and differences in data, and identifying future questions (Perry et al., 1998). They are usually focused on the construction of knowledge and theory, as opposed to theory testing or validation (Parkhe, 1993; Winand et al., 2010). Creswell (2009) adds to this, describing a case study as “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). Yin (2006, p. 13) list the four key characteristics of case studies as:

1. the case being a bounded system defined as clearly as possible;
2. the case is a case of something (i.e. there is a determined unit of analysis);
3. there is an explicit attempt to preserve the wholeness, unity, and integrity of the case;
4. multiple sources of data are used typically in a naturalistic setting.
The term ‘bounded system’ used above refers to the boundaries applied by the researcher to limit the scope and empirical limits of the study (Merriam, 1998). The appropriateness of the selection of a case study research design is supported twofold; firstly, by the practical examples of its use in the research of sporting organisations and secondly, by the fit of the research problem of this study to the characteristics and definitions of a case study methodology.

Case study research can be used for a number of purposes and falls under a number of case study types. Yin (1994, p. 5) posits that at least six case studies can be identified based on a “2 x 3 matrix”. This matrix is presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Case Study Types**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Single Case Study</th>
<th>Multiple Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>Type 1</td>
<td>Type 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>Type 2</td>
<td>Type 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>Type 3</td>
<td>Type 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yin (1994)

The first factor is categorising a ‘single’ or ‘multiple’ case study, determined by whether the research is focused on a single case or two or more cases (Yin, 1994). The second determinant of case study type is whether it is exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Yin (1994) describes these three as;

1. **Exploratory** - defines questions and hypotheses of the study, or to determine the feasibility of the research procedure
2. **Descriptive** - presents a thorough description of a phenomenon within its natural context
3. **Explanatory** - explains the cause and effect relationship through presentation of data.
Using the above definitions, the research to be carried out in this thesis is firmly rooted as a Type 4 case study. This gives theoretical support to the design of this research, where the similarities and differences between multiple cases are the focus, and an exploratory investigative aim is taken to identify these similarities and differences. Case studies can use a qualitative methodology, quantitative methodology or a mixed method process to reach research goals and objectives. A case study design approach consisting of a mixed methodology, and the methods used for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study are presented.

3.3.2. Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research can assist in creating an understanding of a problems dimensions (Smith & Stewart, 2001), and allows the identification of contexts or theories where there is little established knowledge (Smith & Stewart, 2001; Zaltman, LeMasters, & Heffring, 1982). Qualitative research aims to “explicate the ways people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day to day situations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9), and states that the views gathered from individuals are an important tool in building knowledge (Minichello et al., 2008).

Qualitative research has been described as a process guided by the insight and conceptual abilities of the researcher, and is orientated towards exploration and discovery (Patton, 1987; Patton, 1990). Creating a new body of knowledge, or the addition to existing knowledge in central areas, are both strengths of qualitative inquiry. The knowledge provided by qualitative research in investigating existing contexts, theories and dimensions has been shown in the sporting industry in a wide range of literature (Cameron, 1978; Campbell, 1977; Chelladurai, 1987; Chelladurai & Haggerty, 1991; Chelladurai, Szyszlo & Haggerty, 1987; Frisby, 1986; Koski, 1995; Papadimitriou & Taylor, 2000; Shilbury & Moore, 2006). The
body of knowledge of IMC in the Australian sporting environment is developing, and while specific research of IMC in State Sporting Organisations is minimal, there is an existing area of work done both on IMC in other not for profit organisations and corporate sporting businesses. The use of a qualitative inquiry method as an inductive tool provides an exploratory, in-depth view of the central theme of analysis. This approach allows further investigation and testing of developed theories and models to be undertaken.

Within a qualitative research design there are a multitude of research methods available. Merriam (1998) lists the five types of qualitative research methods available as being: basic or generic qualitative study, ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, and case study. A case study methodology was selected as the research basis for this work, as the primary aim of this method is to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those who are involved (Merriam, 1998).

There are three common and appropriate methods employed for data collection for case studies (Patton, 1990). These methods are interviews, observations, and written document analysis. Interview data is collected through interactions with relevant respondents/subjects and includes direct quotations from these subjects about personal experiences, feelings, and knowledge. Observation provides data describing the subject’s activities, behaviours, actions and interactions, and written document analysis studies reports, official publications, and organisation records for usable data (Patton, 1990).

The interview method of data collection was deemed to be the most appropriate, and was employed for the qualitative component of the research. The qualitative analysis was triangulated against the quantitative consumer or market perceptions to provide a robust and reliable view of the issue at hand, and a description of the quantitative research process is outlined.
3.3.3. *Quantitative Research Methods*

Quantitative research methods can be employed in an exploratory or conclusive phase, where the central themes identified and relationships occurring within these themes can be tested and measured (Cavava, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001; Churchill, 1979). Through scale development and construct and measurement model testing, the conceptual framework proposed in the exploratory phase of this investigation can be tested for reliability and validity.

Extensive use of quantitative research methods in sport management and marketing research has been undertaken, and specifically relevant to this research, investigations of consumer attitudes, relationship quality, service quality and behavioural intentions have employed quantitative research methodologies to test and measure theories and hypotheses concerning these central themes. A number of studies (Hollebeek, 2011; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Kim & Trail, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006; Park & Kim, 2000) provided the impetus for developing the approach for data collection, scale development, and modelling. Previous research assisted in the constructions and adaption of the tools employed.

The quantitative component investigates relationships between the constructs and measurement models, and predicts the attitudes and behaviours resulting from consumption of the IMC function of the participating sports bodies. The most appropriate research tool for this purpose was the structured questionnaire (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2004). The scales developed for the questionnaires were based on previous literature, and refined through information gained from the interviews carried out, and an initial pilot study carried out on Deakin University students (discussed in Section 3.3.3.1 where results for the pilot study including scale item refinement, statistics and SEM are included in Appendix A). Scale items were standardised across all surveys with slight wording changes to represent language and
key terms used by the individual sports. Measurement was carried out with the use of a seven-point Likert scale being applied to each item with one point, or a rating of one denoting a statement that was strongly disagreed with, and a rating of seven representing a strongly agreed with statement.

Traditional forms of survey delivery, including a physically mailed out survey was considered but discounted due to time, costs, and potential low response rate (Dillman et al., 2009; Newby, Watson & Woodliff, 2003). Distribution via an online survey was decided upon and implemented. This survey was distributed to a sample of members and participants of the organisations involved, with over 1000 responses in total and a minimum of 300 surveys returned from each of the investigated SSOs. The survey design follows in Section 3.5.2.2, while the scale item definitions and development are discussed in Chapter Six.

Data collected from the surveys was collated and analysed, initially represented as individual datasets, and then as a total dataset of the three SSOs to provide across case and within case analysis. This analysis included exploratory factor analysis to identify and test the reliability of relevant scale items and constructs. The results obtained were then subjected to confirmatory factor analysis techniques to develop and test measurement models and establishment of a conceptual framework, before the final framework was applied to the research questions. These questions involved testing and measuring the relationships between constructs and central themes and theories developed throughout the exploratory, qualitative component of this research.

3.3.3.1 Pilot Study Process

The pilot study process employed, played an important part in refinement of scale items used, and provided extra data for SEM testing of this conceptual framework. Academic panels and first year Deakin University sport management students were involved in the
refining of scales and scale items. Results for the pilot processes undertaken are provided in Appendix A and a brief discussion of these processes follows.

Initial scales and scale items were identified through the literature review of general marketing, relationship marketing and sport specific marketing material. This review led to the identification of five scales, developed into constructs expressed as: experiential benefits, functional benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions. A full list of 72 scale items testing and measuring these constructs were chosen for their suitability to assist in addressing the research questions raised in chapter one.

Discussion of these scale items with a panel of academic experts in the field of sport marketing saw this list of 72 scale items reduced to 65 through deleting items which did not define the constructs or were considered to represent duplicate items. Five experts, sport management staff at Deakin University with roles ranging from senior lecturer to professor, were involved in these discussions supported by an extensive review of literature to provide meaningful outcomes of these meetings. These items were then presented to the Deakin University sport students. From the results obtained, a further three items were deleted due to the students not understanding these items. The development of constructs and the full list of the final 62 scale items are identified in Chapter Five.

3.4. SAMPLE

Sampling methods can be described as the tools and choices used to represent a population based on the frame, size, and design of the selection procedures (Fowler, 1995). A sampling method determines how a sample is collected from the sampling frame, and affects the extent to which sample results can be extrapolated to the chosen population (De Vaus & De Vaus, 2001).
Two overarching categories of sampling methods are commonly applied to social science research; probability samples and non-probability samples. Robson and McCartan (2016) explains “in probability sampling, it is possible to specify the probability that any person will be included in the sample. Any sampling plan where this is not possible to do so, is called non-probability sampling” (p. 263). The nature of investigation relevant to this research does not allow the use of probability sampling methods based on the above definition, so non-probability sampling methods need to be explored to select and employ the appropriate procedure. This is supported by findings from Amis (2005) which explains that most researchers are inhibited by a lack of resources, particularly time, money, and staff available, and for those reasons non-probability sampling methods provide the researcher with a suitable and appropriate sample while conserving valuable resources. Amis (2005), in addition, highlight the suitability of non-probability sampling for this investigation. They outline that non-probability sampling methods should be employed when a researcher aims to conduct an exploratory study, and that these methods can be employed also during the content validation phase, pretesting and for any pilot studies undertaken.

A suite of non-probability sampling methods exists and the most commonly used in social science contexts were considered. These included:

- **Convenience sampling** - where the nearest and most convenient people are chosen to act as respondents, with that process continuing until the required sample size is reached (Robson & McCartan, 2016).
- **Expert sampling** - where a sample of individuals are collected who display known or demonstrable experience and/or expertise in an area relevant to the study (Donnelly & Trochim, 2007).
- **Snowball sampling** - where the identification of individuals who meet the research criteria for participation are first asked to participate, then encouraged to recommend participation in the research to individuals they feel also meet the research criteria (Donnelly & Trochim, 2007).
- **Purposive sampling** allows a researcher to select relevant participants (Patton, 2002), in accordance to knowledge and theory that has been identified previous to the data collection stage (Minichello et al., 2008). It provides a tool to enable the researcher to achieve meaningful insights and understanding with regards to the research question (Creswell et al., 2003). Purposive
sampling allows categories to be developed and different perspectives to be investigated, increasing the meaningful contribution of the data collection (Amis, 2005).

While the above sampling techniques represent the most widely used in exploratory research, given the characteristics and nature of this research, the purposive sampling method was chosen.

At the commencement of this thesis, Tier Two Australian SSOs were approached and invited to participate by email, with a subsequent slow response rate leading to follow up emails and invitations to other Tier Two SSOs. Examples of the sport organisations fitting the Tier Two classification include; Badminton Victoria, Squash Victoria, Gymnastics Victoria, Hockey Victoria, Volleyball Victoria, Triathlon Victoria, Victoria International Shooting Limited and Victoria Canoeing. Summarising the Tier Two SSO characteristics outlined in Chapter One, the three organisations chosen were approached due to their conforming to the following criteria:

- be a recognised SSO by the Australian Sports Commission;
- obtain revenue of between $1,000,000 and $3,000,000 per annum;
- not obtain significant revenue from professional leagues or competitions and;
- currently or recently have been Olympic and/or Commonwealth games sports.

Three SSOs representing Tier Two SSOs agreed to participate in the study. The SSOs were all based on Australia’s east coast with all organisations being based in Melbourne, Victoria due to ease of accessibility to complete required interviews. Although only three SSOs were employed in this study, the data obtained is meaningful due to the cross section of the participants with team ball sport, individual sports, non-ball sports and indoor and
outdoor sports represented. The three participants were identified as SSO1, SSO2, and SSO3 for the duration of the research to ensure their anonymity. They were also labelled in order of size of revenue and resources available. This ordering was chosen to effectively display the similarities and contrasts between the SSOs.

The three SSOs ranged in the number of full time staff employed (excluding coaching staff), with SSO1 employing nine staff, SSO2 employing eight staff and SSO3 employing only five fulltime staff. Total revenue recorded for the 2016-2017 financial year ranged from $2.8 million for SSO1, $2.5 million for SSO2, and $1.6 million for SSO3. Public (government) funding was $300,000 for SSO1, $225,000 for SSO2 and $150,000 for SSO3. All the SSOs represent sports that are currently in the Olympic Games and/or the Commonwealth Games. These sports also displayed a not for profit business model and were organised in the traditional federal structure prevalent in Australian sport. These characteristics are illustrated in Table 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSO</th>
<th>Revenue ($m)</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Public Funding ($m)</th>
<th>Sport Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>$2.8m</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>Olympic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>$2.5m</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>$225,000</td>
<td>Olympic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>$1.6m</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$150,000</td>
<td>Olympic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures sourced from latest available SSO Annual Reports.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

This section provides an overview of data collection and analysis procedures within each of the mixed method approaches.
3.5.1. Qualitative Research of Australian SSOs

The qualitative research undertook a case study approach, incorporating in-depth interviewing techniques and analysis of the interviews.

3.5.1.1. Case Study Approach

Eisenhardt (1989) provides a suitable and thorough guideline to follow in regard to the case study process. The first four steps of this guideline as listed in Table 3.4 were considered appropriate.

The first step in the process was concerned with getting started through the formation and consolidation of the research problem and questions. This stage had already been established and so step two, selecting cases, was next considered. The cases had been determined through the identification and acceptance of Tier Two SSOs. Next was to determine the most appropriate data collection method to employ.

Table 3.4 Guidelines for Case Study Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting Started</td>
<td>Forming and consolidating the research problem and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting cases</td>
<td>Specified population- choosing what sampling method and what population required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting Instruments and Protocols</td>
<td>Multiple data collection methods required- which ones suitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering the field</td>
<td>Overlap data collection with analysis. Flexible data collection methods.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Eisenhardt (1989).

3.5.1.2. Selection of Data Collection Methods

A case study historically, is built using four principle data collection methods. These methods include interviews, observations, document reviews and visual data analysis (Creswell et al., 2003; Fade & Swift, 2011; Stake, 1995). To follow established case study methodology, multiple data sources or perspectives need to be included in the research
(Creswell et al., 2003; Stake, 2013; Yin, 2006). Initially, SSOs considered to form the case study were identified from reviewing selected documents, including financial and annual reports.

A review of the characteristics of Tier Two Australian SSOs provided the framework in which to identify and approach the sporting bodies to be involved. Tier Two SSOs were chosen, as while they are under environmental pressure, the resources they have on hand including staff, finances and knowledge provides the opportunity for a best practice IMC function to address these pressures. The three SSOs chosen represented a mixture of ball sports and non-ball sports organisations, and team and individual sports organisations. These SSOs were identified and included to make the findings of this study generalisable across all sports. Once these SSOs were identified, it was determined that semi-structured interviews would provide the most appropriate data collection tool for the case study research.

3.5.1.3. Semi Structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview style was utilised with the interviewee being a staff member sufficiently knowledgeable of the organisations marketing and specific IMC activities (e.g., CEO, marketing manager, communications manager). This style of interview was considered relevant as “interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to be made explicit” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). Semi-structured interviews offer participants a higher degree of self-expression and provide an appropriate tool to generate rich, thick, exploratory data (Alam, 2005; Amis, 2005). Semi-structured interviews also offer the researcher the ability to alter the questions, and order of questions, to elicit a more detailed response through guiding a respondent to ‘opening up’ on their experiences (Amis, 2005).
Three initial interviews ranging from 35 to 60 minutes were undertaken. The interviews were recorded on a digital recording device and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Notes also were taken directly after the interview to record and comment on communication not observable in the transcripts (e.g. long pauses between answers, body language, facial expressions). This processing remained consistent across all the interviews to provide added reliability to the data collected. Extra interviews were then completed with the participating SSOs (SSO1 three in total, SSO2 three, and SSO3 two, making a total of eight interviews) to gain a more in depth and rich understanding of their organisations than possible through carrying out only the single interview with each.

3.5.1.4. Interview Guide

An interview guide was synthesised from the available literature and the research questions of the study. It proved to be flexible enough to allow the maximum data to be extracted from each respondent. This flexibility occurred in the language used by the interviewee, the order of the questions posed, and any follow up questions deemed by the interviewer necessary to maximise the data extracted from each interview. A range of open and probing questions were developed and used for each area, thereby implementing a funnelling technique. The interviews lasted between 35 minutes to one hour and were based on the following general structure comprising five sections:

- Stage one – profile and background of organisation and staff member and introduced the research project, engaged with the interviewee, and gained basic knowledge of the staff and organisation.
- Stage two - broad initial questions of the organisation including attitudes towards promotion, knowledge of IMC and whether strategies are in place.
- Stage three - aimed to identify the IMC activities undertaken by the organisations and capabilities required and objectives desired.
- Stage four - investigated the effectiveness of the IMC function in achieving the desired goals and explored factors inhibiting IMC performance.
- Stage five - invited the participants to add anything the thought would be useful for the investigation.

The complete structure and question list is attached in Appendix B.
The interview process provided a large amount of raw data which required analysis to extract important themes and concepts. The data analysis procedure undertaken was formulated around previous work by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Cresswell (2002).

3.5.1.5. Data Analysis

All interviews were audiotaped and subsequently transcribed verbatim. These transcripts were reviewed for any errors by the researcher and the data was collated, interpreted, and analysed. The first step in this process was coding, which Miles and Huberman (1994) explain as being the part of a data analysis where the researcher differentiates and combines the data retrieved to study the information. Codes or tags were assigned to give units of meaning to the information compiled during the research, allowing systematic organisation and classification (Smith & Stewart, 2001).

Keywords were applied to sections of text, thereby forming codes, which allowed the reduction and analysis of data and alerted the researcher to trends, themes, patterns, and causal processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Smith & Stewart, 2001). The coding process employed was adopted from Creswell (2002) and is illustrated in Table 3.5. This coding process was initiated by a thorough reading of the transcripts, leading to identification, and highlighting of segments of relevant information. These segments were ‘tagged’ or labelled, and 37 initial categories were recognised, including terms such as ‘amount carried out’, ‘target group junior’, and ‘structure ad hoc’. These categories were refined into second order codes, resulting in 16 categories remaining, which allowed the data to be further refined to align with the research questions posed in this study. An overview and examples of this coding process as used for the research study is provided below.
Table 3.5 The coding process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Step 3</th>
<th>Step 4</th>
<th>Step 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creswell process steps</td>
<td>Initial read through text</td>
<td>Identify specific segments of information</td>
<td>Label the segments of information to create categories</td>
<td>Reduce overlap and redundancy among the categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creswell process example</td>
<td>Many pages of text</td>
<td>Many segments of text</td>
<td>30-40 categories</td>
<td>15-20 categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual study procedure</td>
<td>Transcripts of eight interviews carried out over three SSOs</td>
<td>Key segments of text highlighted from 123 pages of interview transcripts</td>
<td>37 categories of keywords and central themes</td>
<td>16 categories of keywords and central themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Creswell (2002, p. 266)

The coding process undertaken, allowed data to be displayed summarising key themes and conclusions from the interviews. Keywords and central themes included; lack of resources, improvement needed, IMC is important, lack of strategy, no evaluation, and minimal consumer data. Activities and goals were also identified from the interview data providing a rich insight into the attitudes of the organisations regarding the IMC service delivered. This data was then analysed using a two-stage within-case and a cross-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989). Carrying out within-case analysis first, allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with each case “… and for unique patterns of each case to emerge before the investigator pushed to generalise patterns across cases” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540). A cross-case analysis was then carried out, allowing the researcher to generalise findings and develop an understanding and explanation of the research issue (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sample of three SSOs selected for this research represented a cross section of Tier Two SSOs in Australia, and enabled cross-case analysis identifying similarities and differences among the group to be undertaken. Findings are discussed in Chapter Four. Overall it was found that the participating bodies had similar attitudes to IMC strategies where they admitted its importance, but due to a lack of resources, adopted an ad hoc, reactionary suite
of activities. The findings led to a deeper understanding of the research questions posed, and enabled the development of key questions forming part of the quantitative analysis stage.

3.5.2. Quantitative Research of Australian SSOs

The selection of an online questionnaire formed the first step of the quantitative component. Online questionnaires (presented in Appendix C) were distributed to members and participants involved with the SSOs, with over 1000 respondents from the three SSOs completing and submitting the surveys. The rationale behind the questionnaires, the scale items used, and structure and themes of the surveys are introduced, including the process followed in data collection and analysis.

3.5.2.1. Online questionnaires

Quantitative research was employed to determine the reliability and viability of the constructs developed, both from the literature review and the qualitative component of the research. In a social science context, two methods of quantitative data collection are generally employed; experiments and surveys/questionnaires (Churchill, 1979; Hair & Anderson, 2009).

Experiments in the social sciences are utilised for explanatory research, examining the cause and effect of variables in a controlled setting (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008). It is usually conducted in a laboratory setting, with a limited number of related variables offering researchers a tool to investigate the given research problem, through controlling the variables and examining the relationships existing between them (Hamilton & Thompson, 2007).

The survey, or questionnaire, is employed predominately for use in exploratory and descriptive research. The data obtained through the surveys / questionnaires can be used to
test relationships between given variables (Saunders, 2012), and produce and/or support models and frameworks derived from these relationships. Quantitative research methodology can follow a number of forms (Saunders, 2012). This thesis employed a cross-sectional method where data collected from a number of sources (or cases) at one time point is compared and contrasted, to identify the patterns and relationships existing between the given cases.

3.5.2.2. Online Questionnaire Design

The quantitative research consists of a questionnaire designed to investigate consumer attitudes and behaviours regarding SSO IMC, to identify / prove relationships between consumer attitudes, service quality, relationship quality, consumer behaviour, and organisational outcomes. To generate the specific items to include in the questionnaire, the literature review was consulted, and relevant scales from related fields were adapted for use. Scale development is the process of generating items to measure, reflecting the content and domain of both consumer attitudes to SSO IMC and the organisation outcomes. The scale items were refined into a questionnaire and provided a measurement tool to investigate the psychometric properties of the conceptual framework and the relationships contained within.

The scale items were based on the major themes and theories identified in the literature review, including relationship marketing theories such as service quality, relationship quality and consumer behavioural intentions. The constructs employed in this research and identified through the literature review are as follows:

- Consumer perceptions are measured by the experiential benefits and functional benefits constructs. These were based on previous works by Hur, Ko, and Valacich (2011) and Hur, Ko and Claussen (2011).
- Mediating and inhibiting factors are measured through the satisfaction construct based on studies by Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011) and Ko and Hur (2005).
- The relationships between the consumers and the SSOs were measured in the relationship quality construct derived from a number of sub-dimensions
including loyalty, trust and commitment and based on works by authors including Kim, Trail, Woo and Zhang (2011), Boyle and Magnusson (2007) and Park and Kim (2000).

- Finally, within the conceptual framework, a consumer behaviour intention construct was developed and tested to provide a forecasting tool on the actions of consumers given the strengths of the relationships between the constructs listed. These behavioural intentions are in line with desired organisational goals of increasing revenue, raising public perception and awareness of the sport, and increasing the participation rates (Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011; Boyle & Magnusson (2007); Park & Kim, 2000).

Preliminary questionnaire dimensions including experiential benefit, functional benefit, information quality, and interactive quality were considered and developed through an expert panel, and applied initially in the pilot study. Analysing the data resulted in further refinement of the dimensions and measurement items, and these were distributed to the SSO members. An example of the constructs and scales to be employed for the construct Experiential benefit is presented in Table 3.6. Discussion on the development and application of these constructs is provided in Chapter Six.

**Table 3.6 Constructs and Measures Adapted For Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct/dimension</th>
<th>Measure/question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential benefit</td>
<td>The social aspects of SSO X IMC are important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy the conversational interactions from SSO X IMC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy communicating with other members through SSO X IMC tools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy browsing and/or participating in SSO X IMC activities/programs/pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Browsing and/or participating in SSO X IMC tools enriches my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, I enjoy browsing and/or participating in SSO X IMC tools/pages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapted from Park and Kim (2000).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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The resulting measures from these constructs / dimensions underwent statistical testing, including exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling to identify and measure the relationships identified from the research questions. This process also undertook to prove / disprove the overall validity of the proposed conceptual framework.

In addition to the psychometric measures in the questionnaire, demographic and sport and internet usage items were included in the survey, to create an in-depth profile of the participants. Items such as gender, age, internet usage, sport participation levels and years of participation in the sport allowed segmenting of the survey respondents to provide several data points for within case and across case analysis and comparisons. The full survey is presented in Appendix C for further reference.

3.5.2.3. Quantitative Data Collection

The quantitative data collected was through an online tool distributed initially to Deakin University first year sports students. This represented a pilot study to enable determination of the strength of the survey instrument to be established (as presented in Appendix A). Following analysis of the pilot results and refinement of the questionnaire, the final survey was distributed to members and participants of the SSOs. SSO respondents were presented with the opportunity to respond through email and social media articles which provided links to the survey. The pilot study and the main study are now outlined.

3.5.2.4. Pilot Study

A pilot study represented the initial stage of data collection, and provided a mechanism for investigating the suitability of the survey and the validity of the factors measured. The pilot was conducted with a number of conveniently selected Deakin University students during August 2015 and the full results of the pilot study process are
presented in Appendix A. The pilot study employed the developed scales and surveys to evaluate service satisfaction on resulting relationship quality between the students (consumers), and a state sporting organisation (SSO) of their choice. This pilot aided in the elimination of measurement factors that were invalid or duplicates, making the survey delivered to the Australian SSOs more concise, while still ensuring the required elements were included.

3.5.2.5. Main Study

Following the pilot study, the final survey tool was refined and then dispatched to consumers representing the three Australian SSOs which had responded to the qualitative component of the research. The online survey was introduced to participants and members of the sports through emails and social media posts, and these consumers were invited to participate through links included within this communication. The data collected represented a wide range of sport participants and members, and as such provided a rich, wide ranging view of IMC consumption of sport content in Australia. This data then underwent a thorough analysis process.

3.5.2.6. Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained was analysed using SPSS version 23 to provide descriptive statistics, determine validity and reliability of the scale items used in the survey, and the resulting constructs arising from these scale items. Validity and reliability of these constructs were tested using methods from Churchill (1979) and Hair and Anderson (2009), where scale items with a factor loading of below 0.40 were eliminated. Cronbach’s Alpha (C.A) and Construct Reliability (C.R) testing was carried out in exploratory factor analysis to further test these constructs to ensure suitability for developing measurement models. The measurement models were also tested to ensure reliability and appropriateness for inclusion in the conceptual framework. This was undertaken through Confirmatory Factor Analysis,
testing each of the models for a number of goodness of fit indices, as suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009). By testing the correlations of the constructs (factors), within the measurement models, relationships between the factors could be determined, explaining the existence of relationships between the factors and measurement models, thereby supporting the development of the conceptual framework.

Following construction and refinement of measurement models, the initial conceptual framework was developed and tested using SEM tools to provide an initial linear model and respecify the model to present a more complete and accurate representation of the IMC function. This respecification was completed according to data obtained and literature reviewed. Hypotheses were then applied to this final model in order to test and measure the relationships.

3.6. ETHICS CONSIDERATION

Ethics clearance observing the Deakin University guidelines was sought and granted before any form of data collection was undertaken. The research was considered to be ‘Low Risk’ and therefore did not require extensive ethics documentation to be submitted. This documentation is attached in Appendix D. All participants were issued with a Plain Language Statement (PLS) and a consent form, which follows the guidelines and institutional requirements. The PLS provided the participants with information regarding the purpose and the process of the research and their rights within their participation in the study. Confidentiality of the participants was protected with no individuals or organisations identified and no information used outside of this study without the express permission of those involved.
3.7. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter Three outlined the methodology employed. It identified the philosophy, strategies and tools that were used in the collection of data. A realist paradigm was chosen to guide the study due to its suitability in exploratory investigation. A mixed methods approach was employed to address the overarching research problem and constituent research questions with methods used and the samples investigated within this investigation summarised in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7 Summary of Methods Used and Samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determining SSO attitudes towards IMC</td>
<td>Qualitative; Semi-structured interviews and data analysis</td>
<td>3 SSOs, 8 interviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study; Refinement of survey tool</td>
<td>Quantitative; Online survey tool, statistical analysis and SEM methods</td>
<td>127 student responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Study; Investigating consumer IMC perceptions</td>
<td>Quantitative; Online survey tool, statistical analysis and SEM methods</td>
<td>3 SSOs, 351 member/participant responses SSO1, 323 SSO2, 456 SSO3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addressing RQs through application of data to framework</td>
<td>Use of qualitative and quantitative data obtained to address RQs and research aims</td>
<td>3 SSO data sets, 1 overall sample data set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to qualitative enquiry, a multiple case study approach was chosen to frame the research, and guidelines for this process were adapted from Eisenhardt (1989). Three SSOs were selected through purposive sampling to ensure meaningful data was collected. Data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with staff members knowledgeable in the promotion strategies of the organisation, and this was complemented alongside document analysis. Verbal data was recorded and transcribed verbatim. It was first coded using a multi-level coding process, with the codes drawn from literature and the
conceptual framework proposed. Data was analysed using within-case and cross-case processes described by Eisenhardt (1989), providing the results presented in Chapter Four.

The quantitative stage involved identification of consumer attitudes and behaviours regarding IMC programs and activities provided by the SSOs. The consumer attitudes and behaviour intentions regarding these strategies were identified and discussed through a questionnaire, developed, and refined through a literature review, expert panel, and a pilot study. The consumer attitudes, behaviours, service quality and relationship quality measures were investigated to quantify relationships existing between them. These relationships were then applied to the conceptual model to address the five research questions proposed and the overarching research problem. These findings, and a discussion of their implications are presented in Chapters Six and Seven.
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS: ORGANISATION PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMC DELIVERY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Sport organisations in general, and Australian not for profit sport organisations, adopt and implement various IMC and promotional strategies based on organisation orientation, resources available and desired outcomes (Whitburn, Karg & Turner, 2018). However, it has also been suggested that these IMC and promotional strategies are sometimes reactionary, ad hoc, lack feedback or evaluation measures, and therefore do not match the needs or wants of consumers targeted by these activities (Abeza, O’Reilly & Reid, 2013; Abeza, O’Reilly & Seguin, 2017; Abeza, O’Reilly, Seguin, Nzindukiyimana, 2017; Eagleman, 2013; Finch, O’Reilly, Hillenbrand & Abeza, 2015; Thompson, Martin, Gee & Eagleman, 2014).

To assist in identifying the relationships between the services provided by the participating organisations and their consumers, RQ1 aimed to investigate the practices of selected SSOs to determine the internet use characteristics of the organisations. This usage identifies whether they are heavy users of the internet, if they were late adopters of the technological tools and channels available, and if IMC activities and programs offered by the organisations are determined strategically or in a reactive way. The SSOs provide a cross section of the Australian sport delivery system, as well as a representative sample from which to contrast consumer attitudes and perceptions towards service and relationship quality. As such RQ 1 and the focus of results for this Chapter asks:

RQ1: What digital communication / IMC strategies are adopted and implemented by Tier Two Australian SSOs, and what is their digital orientation?

In order to address both the overarching research objective and the more specific research question presented above, an in-depth investigation of the strategic delivery of IMC by the
three participating organisations (SSOs) was required. This chapter is therefore structured as follows: definitions and philosophies of IMC are outlined; the organisational capacities identified by the sport organisations to successfully implement IMC functions are introduced; the activities implemented and tools adopted for use by the participating sport bodies are listed and discussed; the objectives of IMC use and desired goals of the IMC strategies are highlighted and differences within organisations are compared; the electronic marketing orientation of the SSOs is discussed and; overall findings are discussed and summarised. Common themes arising from the interviews were identified and discussed, including de-identified quotes from the interviewees to support these discussions and provide examples.

4.2. ORGANISATION PERCEPTIONS REGARDING IMC DELIVERY

The results of the interviews investigating organisational perceptions of IMC delivery consists of four sections. These sections are represented as the definitions and philosophies of IMC as offered by the interviewees, the capacities of sports bodies required to facilitate effective IMC delivery, the activities and tools employed by the SSOs, and finally, the desired objectives these organisations wish to achieve through the IMC delivery. These four components were identified by Shaltoni and West (2010) and Eagleman (2013) as critical elements in determining the capabilities of an organisation to provide effective and efficient IMC services.

4.2.1. IMC Definition and Organisation Philosophy

4.2.1.1. Results – Defining IMC

A definition of the concept of IMC was required in order to fully investigate and understand the attitudes of respondents towards the activation and implementation of digital IMC strategies. The participating SSO administrators were asked for definitions of IMC with all three SSOs responding in a very similar manner. All SSO respondents instantly linked
IMC to a digital response, largely associated with the tools that can be used to support IMC activity. IMC was connected very clearly with advertising and promotion of their sport and organisation through online channels, and being linked to electronic and digital tools to carry out promotion, which included social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook. An evolution from more traditional to digital delivery methods was also identified. These common themes are illustrated by the responses below:

I would just assume, anything online, anything basically not face-to-face, not done on the ground (SSO3).

Activities or tools that we don’t class as traditional, by that I mean newspapers, radio or television advertising (SSO2).

We promote our sport, our organisation using the internet, we use them to advertise and inform our members (SSO1).

The terms and IMC tools and activities identified, illustrated an understanding of the contemporary nature of IMC and its use in reaching more people than traditional promotion. The evolution of IMC from traditional promotion methods and activities to a new digital or electronic medium was recognised. This is highlighted by the responses below inclusive of examples of the switch in delivery based on this paradigm shift:

Of course, digital promotion or IMC just means that is replacing old tools, moved to a website or an online avenue, using technology. (SSO2).

I always think old is print, so when we are getting newsletters done, or media releases, I might design a poster for an upcoming series… What we will do (now) is that we will send it out as an EDM (electronic direct mail)… distribute it to our member data base, and that will be our form of IMC for that event. (SSO1).

In order to expand on provided definitions (including testing links to traditional promotion definitions), respondents were presented with a traditional promotion definition, stated as: firm led “attempt(s) to inform, persuade, incite, and remind consumers - directly or indirectly - about the brands they sell” (Keller, 2001, p. 819). While the respondents agreed
with this definition, it appears the SSOs were limited in their thinking to the individual tools involved, rather than viewing IMC as a combined set of tools or a strategic process. This was evident as all respondents mentioned the movement of traditional activities to a digital, online environment, and that while the goals remained the same, the actions and processes used were seen as vastly different. Respondents drew out goals and outcomes of IMC, illustrating that all participants predominately perceive that IMC is a communication and information sharing tool, although engagement was also mentioned as an outcome. For example, respondents stated:

It is a platform to communicate when they are not necessarily face-to-face. It is a good mechanism for encouraging community engagement, I think, sharing messages, building a brand and a community through different things (SSO1).

I think it is really important for us to communicate with members so that they can understand what we are here to do and why we are here, and why it is important if you want to do a sport (SSO2).

Common themes emerged, with respondents identifying IMC as being an online, internet-based tool providing communications functions, in order to enhance their organisations brand. The following quotes support this while providing a focus on the outcomes SSOs wish to obtain through the use of IMC, namely, the increase of an organisations clients, and enhancing their brand through improving recognition:

… (we) encourage people to join as an annual member because it contributes a little bit more to the overall growth and development of the sport. We have a website and we do it that way (SSO3)

We are trying to hit those figures of getting children into the sport at a young level and then retention as well, so retaining them in the sport (SSO2).

These initial results pertaining to defining IMC suggested a focus on the tools employed for IMC, and that these tools enhance communication to (prospective) members. It suggests that there exists a broad understanding of IMC but not in an academic sense of
providing a clear definition. What also did emerge from these initial discussions towards defining IMC, was that SSO respondents presented a wide range of IMC philosophies.

4.2.1.2. Results - Philosophy

Shaltoni and West (2010) suggest that the philosophical component of e-marketing orientation is responsible for behaviours on an initiation, implementation, and adoption level. Given these components are integral to the conceptual framework proposed in this research, investigation of SSO philosophy towards IMC is important. With this in mind it is clear to see similarities in IMC philosophy present. SSO1 and SSO2 provide discussion both identifying the philosophical component of IMC and its importance:

It is not a specific philosophy, it is more that all of our communication is based on the internet which makes it crucial to our operations. It is used to try to obtain all objectives of the organisation and is included in our mission statements and vision (SSO2).

We think it is required to be involved in digital promotions as most modern consumer engagement is carried out through the social media and internet and we have started to do some more innovative things in the digital sphere (SSO1).

The above responses from SSO1 and SSO2 respondents contrasted with the philosophy held towards IMC displayed by SSO3:

We do not have a strategy, a lot of our stuff is ad hoc, it is planned in a sense of this event needs to be promoted at this time but there is no overarching strategy behind it (SSO3).

The above responses suggest that SSOs 1 and 2 display a more advanced philosophy with regards to IMC while SSO3’s philosophy is more basic. Defining the philosophies of these SSOs on a continuum from more basic through to more advanced is based on the four statements offered by Shaltoni and West (2010) in regard to measuring EMO philosophy. The study participants that closely followed these statements were defined as having a more
advanced philosophy, while those that followed less closely had a more basic philosophy. These results are discussed later in Section 4.4.1.

4.2.2 Organisational Capabilities Required For IMC Delivery

4.2.2.1 Results – Capabilities

It has been suggested that Australian SSOs require a range of resources and capabilities to implement IMC strategies successfully. As such, interview questions focussed on identifying the capabilities required for IMC strategies within the participating organisations. Responses elicited similar themes within SSOs, indicating a lack of resources prevents their IMC strategies from reaching their full potential with; a) money and; b) staff (represented by the lack of staff, staff hours (time), along with the skill sets possessed by staff), as being the major inhibitors to their IMC being carried out to its full potential. The following comments highlight this:

More money and more staff would always be good. You know, someone with digital media skills, from that background. Also, they should be able to focus on marketing, IMC, and not other jobs (SSO3).

Yes, along with a lack of staff numbers, the staff we have, some are hesitant in terms of adopting it. I guess not being familiar with how to manage it and what happens when they do (SSO1).

The importance of staff and money was further supported with the following statements highlighting the need: a) to increase the resources available to develop IMC strategies and activities in order to increase the organisation’s resources (revenue) and; b) enhance the skill set possessed by the staff employed. All organisations indicated that staff numbers, time available to staff, and money allocated to IMC is limited, but where an organisation can develop these skills the rewards can be extremely beneficial:
…a person with good digital media skills, website design, produce and edit video. Resources are small so anything we can do in-house can help free up budget for use in other areas (SSO1).

We need to make sure, moving forward, that staff have these media skills, digital, internet skills so we can achieve good promotion outcomes, drive memberships and awareness within our budget (SSO2).

In addition to staff and money, another capability / resource stood out as critical to the effective and efficient activation and implementation of IMC strategy. This was leadership, in the form of driving strategy and change.

Leadership shaped the IMC activities of all of the SSOs, and a definite and important link between the two was apparent. A common theme throughout the interviews was the impact that a change of leadership had in strengthening IMC strategies and increasing its importance within the organisation. A wider understanding of the benefits of IMC, a wider range of activities employed, and goals sought after, were illustrated as a direct consequence of leadership change. This change in leadership was both due to a change of person in the leadership role, and/or a change of approach by the person in the leadership. For example, the importance of leadership and people in changing the priorities of SSOs and driving the activation and implementation of IMC appear in the following statement:

I think, coming into this role I see a chance to use my previous experience to improve the digital side of things, IMC. It has been done before but not to a high level and I want to change this, improve this element of our organisation (SSO1).

Many strategies, activities and tools were implemented both through leadership changes and through the realisation of the value of IMC to an organisation. These are articulated in the following comments:

We are at the beginning of a new planning phase which ties in to a change of CEO, this new phase will see us try to become more strategic and plan ahead, not be reactive (SSO2).
Yes, I guess it is just a bit reactive at the moment as to trying to get things done, but with a change in leadership we are starting to become more strategic and plan things more (SSO1).

Data illustrated that resources and capabilities have been shown to have the potential to both be operational and strategic. However, SSOs showed a tendency towards a day to day reactionary operation, rather than a planned, strategic process. The importance of operational resources and strategic resources in a successful IMC program is highlighted below:

More staff, properly trained that can just concentrate on promotion, on IMC. Again, resources stop this from happening (SSO3).

4.2.2.2. Results – Facilitators & Inhibitors

While leadership was shown to be important in the activation and implementation of IMC, the lack of data available about their target markets is a major inhibitor to IMC performance. SSOs identified the lack of data in regard to their target markets prevented the effectiveness of IMC being measured. This prevents an evaluative feedback loop being utilised to modify the activities chosen to deliver the messages to these target groups, and also the resources required to target them effectively. This lack of data is apparent in the following statements:

We need to get better at understanding who the (SSO1) community is first and foremost. Without knowing who these people are, or what their demographics are, you never know if the content you put out there and the promotions you put out there are valuable to them and engaging enough (SSO1).

We have just started collecting data on our membership groups and hope to be able to use this moving forward. Without knowledge of your members it is hard to create the right message and reach the right people (SSO2).

The lack of data on target markets also prevents the SSOs in segmenting the market and targeting different groups with different messages and through different platforms. Very
simplistic segmenting took place in two SSOs with electronic database messages being targeted to a specific group based on location:

…with the event … in five weeks’ time, we will send EDMs direct to members. It is important to segment the market if we have a specific EDM that we need to go out, and we will segment them that way, but otherwise if it is a web, if it is a flyer, if it is general news, it will go to those 120,000 members, unless it is a coaching or volunteer issue (SSO2).

However, the consistent theme is that the target markets of the respondents are treated as a whole, and covered through a blanket IMC strategy, with the SSOs recently becoming aware of this and prioritising changes to this method. The following quotes demonstrate this:

We just have one big state database of all of our members and event participants. We don’t do any specific targeting at this stage. We just communicate to them as one group (SSO1).

…we just use a blanket method at the moment. We have a database but don’t really utilise the info (sic) to create segments. We send the same message to everyone although it is probably not the best way to get cut through and action (SSO3).

The resources available from National sporting organisations (NSOs) and government in the forms of technical knowhow, guidelines, or leadership, play only a minor role in IMC, although SSO1 did indicate some co-operation and alignment of messages guided by the national body relevant to the whole sport.

…I guess we would go to our national body or our state colleagues. I draw on people from their states and my professional network for design and graphics sort of things (SSO1).

Our national body and other state offices are very helpful. We can work together, have workshops where we help each other out a lot (SSO1).

All of the SSOs agreed they were generally happy with the amount of support in those areas supplied by the NSOs and government bodies including the ASC. Respondents from
SSO2 and, in particular, SSO3, admitted that the NSOs of their specific sport is a resource that they recognise as being available, but they do not necessarily access:

We know there is government support available but think we are doing an ok job with the stuff they can help us with so don’t really use it or ask for help (SSO3).

The government provides a lot of information, lots of educational tools. We don’t ask for much input from them but are aware they are there as a resource if needed (SSO3).

Other government sporting organisations including advocacy groups and event promoters were identified during the interview process as facilitators of IMC programs. Although these two entities sit outside of the sphere of control of the SSOs, they assist SSOs in achieving their strategic and operational goals, and must be included as a capability or resource due to this fact.

As well as inputs, respondents also noted there were inhibitors - which while falling outside the specific scope of the research questions - had significance for the IMC strategies of the SSOs, and therefore warrant inclusion here. These inhibitors are grouped as knowledge of the operating environment, and relate to the lack of information that SSOs have in relation to their communities, and the target audience and the knowledge of competition from other sporting organisations. This lack of knowledge prevents accurate measurements of goals and KPIs, and inhibits effective and efficient delivery of the promotion message. This is highlighted by the following quote from SSO3:

...without knowledge of your members, your community, you can’t decide what they need, or they want. Without that you have no way to tell if your actions or programs are working (SSO3).

Data from the interviews also recognised challenges in the wider sport environment in Australia, with respect to the competition for funding, audience, and media coverage. A common theme throughout the interviews was the battle of the Tier Two SSOs to attain
revenue and attention, in a sporting environment dominated by corporate sports including the football codes and cricket:

It is such a great sport, but it struggles with traditional sporting codes hogging the media. Improving our digital media, improving our profile, increasing awareness that is our goal, mission (SSO2).

Technology and infrastructure was not mentioned by any of the SSOs during the course of the interviews. The only mention of technology as an inhibitor was the age of the websites in use in two of the SSOs which are presently being updated. This shows technology and infrastructure was not portrayed by the participants as a resource or a capability that is inhibiting the performance of IMC activities.

It was clear that a lack of resources created frustrations of not being able to implement IMC strategies to their maximum potential. The lack of money and staff numbers / time were the two major resourcing inhibitors of IMC activities. Leadership was identified as being crucial in achieving a successful IMC program. Finally, staff skill sets were identified as an important resource, with examples where these act as either an inhibitor or facilitator, alongside the importance of recruiting staff with the right knowledge of IMC. Technology and infrastructure was not noted as being either a facilitator or inhibitor of IMC, and government support in the form of knowledge and advice from the NSOs and the ASC played only a limited role.

4.2.3 IMC Activities and Tools Employed by Australian SSOs

Chapter two identified a wide range of activities that fit the IMC definition. These activities were both digital evolutions of traditional promotion methods, and new and unique activities enabled through technological advances. Interview questions sought to identify and summarise the activities SSOs considered IMC activities, which ones they have activated and
implemented, and how they prioritise these activities in order to gain insight into services provided and, additionally, to develop a survey tool used to measure consumer perceptions.

4.2.3.1. Results – IMC Tools Used

Alongside the identification of IMC activities, discussion of what IMC activities achieve for organisations, and the goals they hope to obtain from their utilisation occurred. The activities identified follow three broad categories comprising; social media and websites; e-commerce, CRM and database marketing and; broadcast, online forums, gamification, crowd funding, online auctions, fantasy sport and online advertising.

Social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook and the SSOs website emerged from the interviews as the most used and important. Many respondents included these activities in their definition of IMC, illustrating how SSOs thinking of IMC is dominated by these activities. As stated:

Our activities, promotions are very limited really. Just social media really, Facebook and Twitter. Also, our website and emails, newsletters. That is how we communicate and advertise our sport (SSO2).

We promote online, communicate online, Facebook account, Twitter, for messaging and engagement. We have also improved our website and use this also (SSO3).

The value of social media activities was a common theme throughout the interviews, with respondents indicating that it delivers cost effective, timely content to a large audience. Social media, as an information source, as well as an engagement tool, was also a common theme throughout with comments such as:

Everyone seems to communicate and engage through social media, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest. Facebook is what we mainly use to reach people (SSO3).
…social media gets to lots of people for low cost, large reach. Usually does not take very long to send out a message and this can be changed or updated quickly and easily (SSO1).

Social media was used by the SSOs as both an information source and a tool for consumer engagement, with two-way conversation actively encouraged by the organisations, as described below:

… (we can) use our social media to engage members, start conversations, get feedback on our activities. Positive feedback, improvements we need to make. We can take these ideas on-board and use it to help our service (SSO1).

Our organisation uses it mainly for information sharing at the moment, but we really try to drive engagement and sharing ideas. We keep members updated with events times, fixtures, offers, membership reminders and we ask for ideas on how these can be improved or what our members want (SSO3).

Social media was also used as an alternative to online forums through providing a channel for the community to voice their opinions, without the full-time moderation required for an online forum as SSO2 describes:

With Facebook and Twitter, we find they have most of the elements of forums or blogs, so we don’t really use them (SSO2).

In addition to the organisations social media activities the SSOs website was also seen as being important, with many of the SSOs explaining that while it is a foundation for all other activities, it also provides a service as an information sharing platform.

We link everything through our website, drive traffic to the pages from our Twitter and our Facebook with hyperlinks. We can reach people with social media and bring them to our content on our site that way (SSO1).

We use websites a lot and I think it is very important for our members to visit our website. For members they can access all of our information and resources and social media channels. Also bringing people to our site exposes our sponsors with our ads on the pages (SSO2).
The websites of the respondents, apart from providing a base for the other activities, including e-commerce, social media, and CRM, were focussed on the supply of current content in the form of information to members and the wider community. The importance of the website for the sporting communities was a common theme, and highlighted the importance their website had in sponsor relationships as shown by the statement:

… an increase in profile can drive an increase in media coverage which should then attract sponsors and income (SSO3).

On-field events and results, membership and other offers, and news stories, were the major categories of information shared with consumers as shown by the comment:

… (it is used for) sharing results, scores, all of that information, also member promotions, talking to our current members about membership and the benefits membership, we talk to them via our website (SSO2).

Educational resources in the form of coaching and officiating information, and locations of where to participate were also supplied in a number of cases where:

… (we have an) education portal on a drop-down menu which includes videos, YouTube and PDF documents for coaches and umpire, posters and videos or interviews with other coaches, coaching clinics, and seminars (SSO1).

Social media activities and websites were the only IMC activities put forward by all the respondents in response to the open question posed to them. A further list of IMC activities collated through the literature review was suggested to the organisations in order determine any familiarity they had with it, whether these activities were employed by their SSOs, and to what purposes. The activities suggested were; online forums, customer relationship marketing (CRM) and database marketing, broadcast, e-commerce, gamification, crowd funding, online auctions, fantasy sport and online advertising.
CRM and database marketing was utilised frequently by all of the participants to share information, but was not recognised as an IMC activity until prompted. Membership benefits, information about events, sporting results and upcoming fixtures, were all communicated to the sporting communities of the SSOs. The use of these e-newsletters or e-flyers is illustrated below:

We send out an EDM every fortnight, an e-newsletter to our members. It usually has the same format; upcoming events, news, results, membership detail and some feature pieces. We really use it to keep our members informed and up to date (SSO2).

It could be suggested that as one of the first tools available, CRM and database marketing was overlooked as an IMC activity due to the length of its use potentially outdating respondents’ perceptions of the contemporary nature of IMC. CRM and database management was frequently used by all of the SSOs, and was specifically used as an information sharing source informing their sporting communities of events and products offered by the SSOs.

No advanced target market segmentation was evident in the use of database and CRM, with a generic strategy occurring with newsletters being mainly released to all community members, with the exception of geographic segmentation, when only the local community received information about upcoming events.

E-commerce activities were seen by respondents as a means of both increasing revenue through online merchandise sales, and decreasing administrative workloads and expenses through the use of online payment for membership fees. This provides a streamlined revenue raising process, with e-commerce also minimising administration costs, as demonstrated by:
We do some e-commerce through our store, online shop. We sell coaching resources, coaching seminars, and clinics, we also use it for membership purchases, ticketing, and events (SSO1).

Our shop or online store helps streamline purchasing for our events and memberships. We find it frees up resources, staff hours (SSO2).

Online forums were familiar to the participants, but none of the SSOs involved utilised them. The requirement of 24-hour moderation, and a lack of knowledge in how to properly run them, were major factors in SSOs not employing them. Social media was also seen as a substitute for online forums, with fans and consumers able to voice their opinions and concerns over those channels. This was identified by all of the interviewees, an example of which follows:

Our organisation doesn’t do it because we don’t have someone to monitor these things 24 hours a day. We are concerned about negative or abusive messages so without this monitoring, moderation, we don’t think we should do it (SSO3).

The use of broadcast as an IMC activity by the participants was seen as crucial due to the prohibitive costs of broadcasting on traditional channels. This was again clearly a response of all SSOs and exemplified by:

...the only way for us to get on television is to pay. Other sports have money thrown at them, get paid TV rights but we need to pay for airtime. It is expensive, so we need to look to other channels, YouTube or put live streaming on our site (SSO1).

We need to have a product suitable for television. Our sport is great but camera angles, editing, production. If it costs $100,000 for a one hour show how do we get this back, how are we sure we will get a return (SSO1).

Broadcast was seldom used by the participants, and when adopted was used as an engagement tool to increase awareness and raise the profile of the users. The commercial side of broadcast was identified by all of the participants with the attraction of sponsors being discussed especially by SSO1 and SSO2.
If we did have the coverage, with spectators watching, then sponsors would be interested. But without this guarantee it is hard to justify the cost to potentially attract sponsors (SSO2)

The importance of broadcast was discussed with the planned outcome of increasing engagement, improving the SSOs profile through awareness, and leveraging of the broadcast to improve commercial and sponsorship opportunities. This importance is quite clear from the following two quotes from SSOs.

You can talk all you want about your sport, but nothing beats watching it. Spectators become participants which can lead to them becoming members. This awareness leads to media, which brings revenues, sponsors, membership fees (SSO1).

Videos, streams, footage of the players or people they know leads to engagement. Consumers want or are starting to want a move away from static material, information to video content (SSO2).

Although the evolution of broadcast through new digital channels offers Tier Two SSOs a tool to bypass the competition and costs associated with broadcasting through traditional channels, barriers still exist limiting the use of broadcast. As this example shows:

It is hard to provide a high quality online stream. Cameras editors, high resolution cameras and internet speed and also reliable, you don’t want your stream to drop out. It is very difficult to provide this so instead of offering a low-quality product which can damage our image, so we chose not to provide as much streaming as we should (SSO2).

The above statements highlight that limitations in technology available, the cost of outside bodies producing the content, unsuitability of the sport for viewing, and a lack of staff skills and knowledge were all shown to limit the use of broadcast on digital channels in Tier Two sports.

Although not expressly noted by respondents, research of organisations websites recognised the IMC activity of online advertising. SSO1 displayed a high level of this activity through committing significant space on their websites to corporate partners in the form of
banner ads and click-through hyperlinks. SSO2 provided the same service to their corporate partners but the space allowed for them, and the sophistication of the ads projected from the website, were not at the same level as SSO1. SSO3 did not offer this service for corporate partners and only advertised links for related government agencies and departments.

Online auctions were not identified as being used by any of the participating SSOs, and in addition, gamification as an IMC activity, was not implemented by any of the respondents and was not in the planning or thought process of any. A definition of examples of these types of tools were provided to the respondents to garner any meaningful discussion of the activity. The definition of gamification includes ‘the use of game-like mechanics in non-game scenarios to increase engagement in an activity’ (Karg & McDonald, 2011, p. 329), and examples such as tipping competitions, quizzes and other competitions to increase consumer engagement and interaction were given. None of the SSOs currently undertook these activities, as evidenced by the following responses:

What is gamification? How can we operationalise this or can it be used to help achieve our goals and objectives (SSO1)?

We don’t use that, I think through a lack of knowledge on how to do it, use it but also not knowing what we can achieve through using it (SSO2).

This lack of awareness in the advantages of gamification activities, was consistent from all respondents, and was also present for both crowd funding and search engine optimisation (SEO). None of the SSOs actively engage in these activities, and display only a basic knowledge of the tools, therefore could not see any real advantage in them. The advantages of these activities for SSOs in terms of raising funds for a special project (crowd funding), or a more efficient search engine optimisation leading to ease of location through internet searches, had to be explained to the participants. Further complicating any desire to
be involved in these types of activities could be linked to the resourcing problems identified earlier.

4.3.3.2 Summary

To illustrate the use of IMC activities by SSOs, Table 4.1 highlights the frequency of use of an activity by an SSO ranging from high use through to none, indicating a lack of awareness. This table creates a visual means of judging SSOs IMC priorities and sophistication. The rate of activation and implementation of each IMC activity in Tier Two Australian SSOs is illustrated, which provides a summary of the adoption of the activity within these types of organisations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals and focus of use.</th>
<th>SSO1</th>
<th>SSO2</th>
<th>SSO3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement and information</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement and information, sponsors relations</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM &amp; database management</td>
<td>Information</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement, profile and commercial</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue raising</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advertising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue raising</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamification</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Auctions</td>
<td>Revenue raising</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Forums</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEO &amp; Crowd funding</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 presents two important results. Firstly, it clearly illustrates usage patterns of IMC activities within Tier Two SSOs with social media, websites, and CRM activities being prioritised. E-commerce was partially implemented, with two SSOs utilising it to a certain degree, and broadcast was considered by the respondents but not with any great conviction.
Gamification, online auctions, online forums and SEO and crowd funding were not used by any of the SSOs, and a lack of awareness of these activities was evident.

Secondly, Table 4.1 summarises the focus and goals of the IMC activities, and provides an illustration of the patterns of use of each tool. This suggests that Australian SSOs, even though they report on a wide range of activities and tools being in use, the effectiveness of these tools is difficult to measure, due to a lack of information of the target market and a lack of evaluation measures or tools used. In addition, the range of objectives IMC is being employed to meet, are quite basic, and reflect traditional promotion objectives, thereby not taking advantage of the whole range of possible benefits provided.

4.2.4 Objectives of Organisation IMC Service Delivery

Table 4.1 highlights the similarities and differences in the uses of IMC activities by the SSOs. This section considers the objectives targeted by participating SSOs through implementing the tools and activities for IMC purposes.

4.2.4.1. Results – Objectives

The IMC strategies of the SSOs were based on providing information to, and engaging with their chosen communities, with a key aim of attracting members and financial resources, portraying, and spreading a positive image of the organisation, and creating awareness of the organisation and its programs. The literature supports this by stating that attracting members and financial resources, portraying, and spreading a positive image of the organisation, and creating awareness of the organisation and its programs, have been
highlighted as objectives of SSO promotional strategies (Churchill & Peter, 1995; Stanton, Etzel, & Walker, 1994).

Attracting and retaining participants and members through IMC activities was the common theme for respondents. All SSOs recognised this goal as the key to the success of their organisation, with the value of retaining members linked to the development of the sport, and more directly, to revenue from membership fees. As some examples, respondents stated:

We derive most of our income through membership fees, so it is critical to maintain and improve our participation numbers. Also, government funding is based on these numbers, so it brings in two revenue streams (SSO1).

We are a not for profit sport, so memberships and public funding are our income streams. An increase of awareness through promotion or word of mouth can generate a snowball effect, and bring in even more participants and members (SSO3).

Increasing the profile and awareness of the sport and sporting organisation was identified as a goal of IMC, with SSO2 underlining the importance of an increased profile in the process of obtaining more resources. All three SSOs identified the commercial advantages of the IMC activities they had in place, with sponsor engagement, a direct link from increased members to revenue, and an increased profile all facilitating an increase of resources. The following examples highlight this:

I think the role of IMC, my job, is to increase awareness and enhance knowledge of our sport. (To) show everyone we have a fun, accessible sport, and a well-run organisation (SSO1).

…we need to be strategic. If we plan to promote and do this well, it, in turn, should generate an increase in profile, increase members and get resources to use to improve the awareness of our sport and hopefully lead to sponsorships and larger income down the track (SSO2).
SSO3 also recognised the need for more sponsors, a higher level of engagement with sponsors, a longevity of sponsor relations, the dependence of sport awareness, and an attached brand and positioning in attracting it:

We think that an increase in profile can drive an increase in media coverage which should then attract sponsors and income. We are not there at the moment, but it is what we plan to achieve (SSO3).

The not for profit status of Tier Two SSOs in Australia has shaped the goals of the respondents, with commercial benefits being seen as a secondary to community engagement and community information, leading to an increase in membership numbers and the retaining of these members long term.

Specifically targeting revenue is not what we do. As a non-profit we have to provide activities and programs, this is our mandate. We need to leverage this to get revenue, more activities means more participants and members which leads to more revenue (SSO1).

SSOs seek to obtain community engagement to increase membership numbers, and to retain members, enhance relationships with sponsors to obtain revenue, raise the awareness and profile of their sports to attract members and gain revenue (from sponsors and increased membership fees), and obtain revenue directly and through sponsors. The overall IMC goals identified for each SSO are summarised in Table 4.2 and illustrates the overarching IMC strategy employed by each SSO, providing a comparison of these within the group studied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSOs</th>
<th>Goals and outcomes sought through IMC.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>Increase membership numbers, enhance sponsors relations, raise awareness and profile, and obtain direct revenue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>Increase membership numbers, enhance sponsors relations, raise awareness and profile, and obtain direct revenue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>Increase membership numbers, raise awareness and profile, and raise revenue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The SSOs all display similar overarching strategies, with differences based on their e-marketing sophistication and their strategic goals. To ensure these goals are met, organisations must deliver activities to a target market, which was investigated through a probing question. A very basic philosophy in regard to the targeting of IMC activities was common in all SSOs, with only basic segmentation processes occurring, and an overall or undifferentiated approach being the most prevalent. These quotes clearly show this:

Our EDMs or newsletters go out to everyone. We have information on our database to create categories, but we don’t try to aim messages or newsletters, just communicate to everyone really (SSO1).

We should try to target different users, coaches, volunteers and participant types as we have that information. We do not think it would achieve much more than our current e-newsletter to all of our members, so we save our time with one newsletter (SSO2).

The only segmentation that occurred was a geographic based segmentation, employed in the transmission of information, usually for events, in the forms of electronic newsletters and flyers illustrated by SSO2:

…with our events, if they are in a certain city or town we might send our members there, or people on our mailing list, an extra newsletter or flyer reminding them of the event and pushing for action. There is a general one that informs everybody about the event, but a specific one to the region can help drive extra entries (SSO2).

Various segments were identified in each SSOs community, with significant differences between the groups apparent, and with all potentially offering different benefits to the sports:

We have different groups within our members, our community, which we know can provide different benefits like participation or volunteering. Juniors want to participate in everything, while social and senior members are more likely to volunteer. Also, adults and juniors have different spending patterns, amounts they can spend so we can leverage this (SSO3).

Seniors, groups from disadvantaged backgrounds, can participate in different programs. This can bring in membership and participation revenue,
but also government grants and funding. It also raises awareness and public perception of our organisation. Also, if you have a junior athlete participate and become a member, you can have a customer for life, so it is important to attract junior participants (SSO1).

However, despite this, and the knowledge that segmentation is important as shown be the following two statements:

We can identify different groups on our database, but we don’t really change our messaging, our tools or language to recognise this and take advantage of the groups. We need to work on improving this in the future (SSO3).

…our sport has over 100,000 members and people who receive our newsletters or access and contribute to our social media. We have old, young, elite athletes and social athletes. We think we need to improve or tailor our IMC to cater for these, but will there be an ROI on the extra time it takes to do it (SSO1).

None of the SSOs employed any sophisticated attempt at segmenting through IMC, with largely an undifferentiated strategy being employed to target differing consumer groups. This theme continues with the lack of any measurement techniques and specific IMC goals being identified being common across the participating SSOs. IMC goals were tied in to overarching organisation goals for all of the respondents, illustrating the importance of IMC in achieving strategic plans. This importance is clear from these quotes:

It is not a specific philosophy, it is more that all of our communication is based on the internet, which makes it crucial to our operations. It is used to try to obtain all objectives of the organisation, and is included in our mission statements and vision (SSO2).

We think it is required to be involved in digital promotions, as most modern consumer engagement is carried out through the social media and internet, and we have started to do some more innovative things in the digital sphere (SSO1).

Goals, including increasing membership, community engagement and leveraging commercial opportunities, were all stated as being goals of the participants, and also identified as outcomes provided by IMC activities. It was found through the interviews that
the outcomes sought after, and the programs driving them, were market based and not through a determined IMC strategy as shown here:

Instead of doing what everyone else is doing, trying to keep up with what we see day to day, we need to put in place a plan, a strategy. Work out what we want or need to obtain and then set out a way to achieve it (SSO3).

With our change in staff, our leadership, it will work in well with a move to being plan based, strategic. Not just doing the day to day things, but thinking and planning ahead more than what we do now (SSO2).

The extent to which these specific and overarching goals are being achieved through IMC programs could not be uncovered in this dissertation, given a lack of operational KPIs in most SSOs, and no history of KPI collation allowing for a longitudinal comparison of strategies and programs. This lack of measurement is attributed to the SSOs failure to fully understand the communities they are targeting with IMC. With little knowledge of the target groups, the effectiveness or efficiency of strategies and programs cannot be determined. This was identified by all the respondents as a major barrier to successful IMC, and many are starting to implement projects to rectify the problem. The following quotes highlight this problem and were consistent throughout:

We need to get better at understanding who the (SSO1) community is first and foremost. Without knowing who these people are or what their demographics are, you never know if the content you put out there and the promotions you put out there are valuable to them and engaging enough (SSO1).

We have just started collecting data on our membership groups and hope to be able to use this moving forward. Without knowledge of your members, it is hard to create the right message and reach the right people (SSO2).

The absence of these measurement instruments prevents a feedback loop from occurring, where positives and negatives of IMC activities can be highlighted and rectified by changing the activities employed, the messages they are delivering, and the way they are delivered.
4.2.4.2 Summary

Australian SSOs employ IMC strategies and activities to achieve a number of objectives. Overall these objectives are broadly consistent, with only SSO3 not recognising use of IMC for enhancing sponsors relations, raising awareness, and obtaining direct revenue. Objectives of IMC use are predominantly in line with traditional promotion objectives. All SSOs admitted to minimal data collection regarding consumers, which has led to some difficulty in establishing KPI frameworks in which to measure effectiveness of IMC strategies. Best practice methods suggested by Shaltoni & West (2010) and Shilbury et al. (2017) include evaluation tools and customised messages among other tools that need to be utilised to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the IMC function. The investigated sport bodies did not show evidence of consistent use of either of these tools. This leads to a lack of knowledge of the market place and the effect current IMC activities are having on consumers, while also not being able to maximise the potential benefits from different user groups by not targeting them with specific messages. Basic organisational aims of increasing participation and revenue are being used as measurement tools, without the direct effect of IMC on these elements being identified and measured.

4.2.5 Organisational EMO in Regards to IMC Delivery

Shaltoni and West (2010) explained the importance of e-marketing adoption in increasing profitability and improving marketing functions. This makes measuring the extent of an organisations EMO important, as it provides a guide to what an organisation is doing well, and what it needs to improve on. Given previous discussion explored the specific components of the EMO conceptual framework (philosophies, capabilities, IMC tools, and outcomes), the results now turn more directly to the EMO of the SSOs.
4.2.5.1. Results – EMO

EMO can be divided into four categories: philosophical, initiation, implementation, and extent of adoption (Shaltoni & West, 2010). By applying these categories, it is possible to better understand e-marketing orientations, and thus understand how Tier Two Australian SSOs implement, initiate, and adopt IMC strategies. The four categories that comprise the EMO framework of Shaltoni and West (2010) allow the research to be developed in line with these four themes.

Shaltoni and West (2010) explain that the philosophy component of their EMO framework measures attitudes of organisations in regard to how important they think IMC is, how linked IMC success is to organisational success, and how innovative in regard to IMC the organisation is. Data highlighted a range of philosophical differences in regard to e-marketing, as was previously established.

These findings illustrate a large variance of philosophies apparent. These differences suggest that individual SSOs will approach IMC in a variety of ways, and as such, a one size fits all approach is not appropriate for IMC in Tier Two Australian SSOs.

The initiation element of EMO indicates when e-marketing ideas are converted into formal plans and strategies. Activities, including gathering information about e-marketing, and holding planning meetings, fall under this aspect of initiation. All the participants in this study displayed initiation behaviours from the ‘we keep an eye on what everyone else is doing’, to ‘researching the contribution different IMC tools and messages can bring to the organisation’. Again, as with philosophy, there was a range of initiation levels identified throughout. At a basic level there was a common theme of observing competitor and general public use of IMC activities, as described below:
We, of course, look at our other state organisations and similar sports to see what they are doing. It feels like you always need to be doing something, implementing new tools. The applications and technology change so quickly (SSO3).

Sports doing well in the digital sphere, heavily resourced ones like cricket, football, you need to look at what they are doing and try to implement it (SSO1).

Two of the respondents (SSO1 and SSO2) identified that in-house research on IMC activities occurred during the course of operations:

When we have a look at what other digital people are doing in their organisations we sit down and think ‘can we do this, would our members and stakeholders use this, would we gain something from implementing this’. If the answers are yes, then we try to implement it (SSO1).

No specific IMC meetings were discussed throughout the interview process, however SSOs 1 & 2 mentioned the existence of IMC plans, the KPIs attached to them and the necessity of having realistic, measurable, and achievable strategies:

…our lack of knowledge of results of KPIs. We can tell you at the end of each year if our membership went up or if we made more money, but not what caused it. We need to have more result information or evaluation to set realistic goals that we can obtain (SSO1).

These responses illustrated a structured and well thought out process being applied to the initiation stage of IMC. The next stage of the EMO framework, the implementation phase of e-marketing orientation, involves the actions required to put e-marketing into place. For example, hiring staff knowledgeable in IMC and updating or improving the organisations website. Across these four themes the SSOs demonstrated similar degrees of adoption. None of the respondents described any inhibition of IMC activities due to a lack of technology infrastructure or support. A common theme across many of the responses was the recent implementation of a modern website in order to fully leverage IMC activities as indicated by:

… (we are) always updating our website, the content, trying to improve the usability. Enhancing our member’s experience. When we first started,
everything digital was static, is that what you called Web 1.0? Now things are multi-media, interactive (SSO1).

The skills of the staff charged with IMC responsibilities were identified, with the view of many SSOs that future recruitment of ‘digital people’ is evidence that staff more knowledgeable in IMC are required:

…a person with good digital media skills, website design, produce and edit video. Resources are small so anything we can do in-house can help free up budget for use in other areas (SSO1).

A range of staff knowledge was apparent throughout, with quotes regarding staff knowledge in IMC ranging from acknowledging these skills, to identifying activities not being utilised or fully leveraged due to a lack of knowledge in current staff: Two contrasting quotes illustrate this:

Even though the digital marketing is my job, responsibility, we have other staff who have skills and experience and always help out. We learn a lot from each other and it is a team effort (SSO2).

I think in the past we have not been very digital, or had a digital focus. Some staff may either not have the right knowledge or are hesitant to use it (SSO3).

The coordination of activities regarding IMC within organisations is simplified by the size of the SSOs that formed the sample. With staff sizes ranging from between five to nine staff members, personal communication, and not inter-departmental was the norm when focussing on teamwork.

The range of implementation adoptions in SSOs are illustrated in Table 4.3. The range moves from a low basic-intermediate level to a more sophisticated intermediate-advanced level in accordance to the resources available and the prioritisation of IMC.

Adoption, in the context of Shaltoni and West’s (2010) EMO framework, refers to the frequency of use of e-marketing tools, the alignment between these tools and the
organisations overall goals, and the use of e-marketing tools for commercial transactions. If applying a three-level marketing adoption measuring tool, with basic level (communication), medium level (transaction), and advanced level (transformation), alongside the EMO framework, it is possible to illustrate the e-marketing orientation of the SSOs. All of the SSOs use e-marketing resources frequently to communicate with their customers or communities, to support traditional commercial activities, and use a basic database to perform marketing activities. Websites, social media and EDMs are frequently employed by the participants to communicate with consumers, and target audiences of the organisations. CRM and database marketing is utilised by all of the organisations to provide their communities with information, usually notifying them about events or products and services offered.

Table 4.3 Overall EMO of Participant SSOs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy EMO rank</th>
<th>SSO1</th>
<th>SSO2</th>
<th>SSO3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate | Basic-intermediate
| Initiation EMO rank | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate |
| Implementation EMO rank | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate-advanced | Basic-intermediate |
| Extent of EMO rank | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate |
| Overall EMO rank | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate-advanced | Intermediate |

With the exception of SSO3, the participants also use e-marketing resources, namely e-commerce tools for selling memberships, information resources and merchandise, to conduct commercial transactions, although this is currently being explored by SSO3 with the goal of
implementing this. All of the SSOs possess and utilise a database of member information, although a common theme that emerged, was the need to upgrade this knowledge in order to segment the IMC target groups more effectively and efficiently to leverage the benefits of consumer relation marketing.

4.3 OVERVIEW OF EMO ORIENTATION

The medium to high levels of EMO adoption evident illustrates the knowledge of the importance of IMC tools. These adoption levels have been suggested to be a function of the four components explored above (Eagleman, 2013; Shaltoni & West, 2010), and provide a philosophical and behavioural study of the elements of EMO evident in the Tier Two SSOs. Combining these four components an overall EMO can be synthesised using the process provided by Eagleman (2013).

The range of EMO displayed, ranged from a basic-intermediate level for SSO3, to a more sophisticated intermediate-advanced level for SSO1 and SSO2. These findings are further supported by examples which contrast the IMC programs of SSO3, and which shows a very limited strategy based on engaging members and increasing participation as illustrated earlier.

Based on the critical components of IMC delivery identified, interviews with the participating organisations provide the organisations perception of the IMC service delivered. In order to provide a more reliable representation of the actual IMC service delivered by the SSOs, documentary analysis was undertaken. This analysis included cross referencing the organisational goals and visions in published material such as strategic plans to determine the relationship between the stated and published attitudes of the organisation, and those
provided by the staff member respondent. A comparison of this material and the interview data supplied by the respondents identified a close alignment.

Analysis was also undertaken on the actual content and messaging provided by the organisations, and again this was compared to interview data to ensure alignment of both sources of information. A review of the website content, social media messaging purposes and CRM and database marketing use was combined with an analysis of published material. When compared to the opinions voiced throughout the interviews, alignment featured between the published documents and interview data, thus triangulating the research data. This was evident in staff members of the organisations relaying visions, goals, and missions in line with literature provided in strategic plans of the sport bodies. Also, the lack of resources acknowledged in the interviews was supported through financial data provided in yearly statements. This result suggested that the data provides a valid and reliable overview of the service provided in the digital sphere by the Australian SSOs involved.

From the interviews it was evident that a lack of strategic planning regarding IMC delivery was consistent across all SSOs. Attitudes towards adoption and implementation featured across the interviews, indicating a lack of a well thought out plan. This lack of planning suggested a lack of skills, lack of resources and a lack of knowledge of the consumer base prevents the SSO from being able to decisively segment the target market. These shortfalls are not unique or new in organisations and not only focussed on digital or new media or even traditional IMC platforms. Even so, it does present an inhibitor to EMO within the sport bodies investigated and warrants further examination of the causes of these shortcomings. Interview statements identify a lack of consistent leadership regarding digital media and IMC within the organisations. Interview respondents stated with some surprise that recent additions to the executive leadership of these SSOs were ‘digital people’, and the leadership these people bring has enabled improvements to be executed in the delivery of
IMC messaging. This suggests a cultural change or refinements to recruitment processes may be beneficial to consider. This may involve the focus on improving IMC delivery being driven by all staff as an ingrained behaviour or attitude, or future employment decisions taking into account potential employees who can drive these improvements to IMC orientation.

4.4. DISCUSSION - ORGANISATION PERCEPTIONS OF SSO IMC

Promotion is an important dimension of SSO performance, providing a tool to generate external funding, as well as the capacity to communicate with and engage internal and external stakeholders. By extension, the suite of activities within IMC are playing an increasing role given their capability to reach, communicate with, and engage large audiences in a low-cost manner compared to traditional media platforms. Discussion follows about IMC delivery for SSOs across each component of effective IMC delivery as suggested by Shaltoni and West (2010) including philosophy, resources required, tools employed, and goals obtained.

4.4.1. Discussion of IMC Definition and Organisation Philosophy

Definitions in existing literature for promotion (Keller, 2001) and IMC (Ruzic et al., 2012) were in part represented by the respondents. Overall, the key concepts drawn out of the Keller and Ruzic et al. (2012) definitions presented promotion and IMC as:

- a series of online, internet based activities
- communication functions
- concerned with increasing an organisation’s clients and enhancing their brand
- strategically planned and executed
IMC is posited as a mix of traditional activities modified into their electronic equivalents, and new forms of unique communications tools such as social media and online communities (Keller, 2001). While SSO respondents largely concur with Keller’s (2001) description, the acceptance of elements for Ruzic et al.’s (2012) definition “a cross-functional process for planning, execution and analysis of communication focused on attracting, maintaining and multiplication of the number of clients on the internet” (p. 9), was less prominent in responses. It appears the SSOs views of IMC were limited to the tools themselves rather than the view of IMCs as a combined set of tools or a strategic process.

Clear similarities were uncovered across all SSOs in regard to their definition of IMC. All respondents identified the move from traditional promotion methods to digital based avenues, the use of websites and social media as the most visible tools, and the use of IMC as a communication and information sharing source. The difference between traditional and IMC both in terms of delivery and benefits was also discussed.

The findings therefore match definitions, with the respondents identifying IMC as an online communication tool focussed on the delivery of information, in order to raise the profile and increase the membership numbers of the respective sports. Responses pointed towards the primary purpose of IMC activities being for attracting and maintaining members and participants, and communicating with them. Additionally, the outcome of engagement was noted, aligned with literature, suggesting engagement may be particularly relevant to new media or IMCs. Regarding philosophy, literature noted that differing levels exist at a basic, intermediate, and advanced level due to the orientations or aims of the organisations studied (Shaltoni, 2006; Shaltoni & West, 2010). The philosophies of SSOs towards IMC was consistent with the literature reviewed, and in addition revealed philosophies which differed greatly across SSOs.
4.4.2. Discussion of Organisational Capabilities Required for IMC Delivery

Shilbury et al. (2017, p. 36) state that “undertaking a successful promotions process requires a comprehensive strategic approach to the integrated communications process, combining people, funds and communications strategies”. Armstrong and Sambamurthy (1999) and Standing and Vasudavan, (1999) add that financial and human resources in the forms of specialised staff dedicated to IMC, effective IT systems, and extensive training in the area, are crucial the successful operation of an IMC strategy. The capabilities and resources required by SSOs to effectively activate and implement successful IMC strategies suggest the following list of resources are critical:

- IMC philosophy
- Resources in the form of staff and money.
- Policy and guidelines.
- People and leadership.

The four critical resources and capabilities listed above, partially align with the results from SSO interview data. Staff numbers/time, money, leadership, and people were shown to be critical resource aspects for the success of IMC strategies by SSOs. NSO and government support from the ASC was discussed as being present but not contributing or inhibiting activities, and the lack of any discussion on policies and guidelines illustrate the embryonic stage of IMC activities within the SSOs interviewed. Armstrong and Sambamurthy (1999) and Standing and Vasudavan, (1999) also discussed staff training and effective IT infrastructure as required capabilities. These two resources also drew a mixed response from the participants with respect to their importance. The importance of staff training, and knowledge was agreed upon, with both the positive and negative effects of training and
knowledge levels being outlined, while technology and IT infrastructure did not enter the debate as either a facilitator or inhibitor to IMC strategies.

Recent and future changes in strategy and direction with regards to IMC were a common theme throughout the interviews. It can be suggested that the completion of these priority and strategy changes will lead to the formation of policy and guidelines in the SSOs operationalisation of IMC. These strategy and directional changes can alter the goals of the organisations IMC programs leading to a different suite of activities being employed and different capabilities and resources being required.

SSOs that displayed higher levels of resourcing either through finances, staff numbers and skills, and leadership, were shown to employ a larger suite of IMC activities and use IMC to obtain a wider array of goals and outcomes. SSO1, ranked as such due to its larger quantities of staff and finances available, illustrates this when compared to SSO3 (ranked lower due to smallest number of staff and funding of participants).

Both strategic and operational resources are important for the successful initiation, implementation, and adoption of an IMC strategy. The data obtained from the interviews supports this, with staff numbers and their skill sets and financial resources being identified as important operational resources. People and leadership was also shown to be an important strategic resource. While the data collected from the interviews supports the existence of all four resources to some extent, only resources in the form of staff and money, and people and leadership were seen as being important.

4.4.3. Discussion of IMC Activities and Tools Employed by Australian SSOs

Masterman and Wood (2006) and Bulut et al. (2012) have described promotion activities as communications activities used to influence the public by informing, persuading,
and motivating consumers to display favourable behaviour towards an organisation. Traditional activities have evolved into their digital equivalents, and new activities are emerging through a change in consumer behaviours and available technology (Law et al., 2004). New technology and consumer demands are driving the constant evolution of IMC channels (Shilbury et al., 2017). As such a list of IMC activities, as depicted in Table 4.1 was collated from the existing body of knowledge, to form a guide in exploring what Tier Two SSOs define IMC activities as being.

The result of examining what Tier Two SSOs think about IMC led to the construction of a series of questions to investigate organisational IMC in regard to capacities and resources required, tools available, throughputs or activities used, and possible benefits from use of the IMC function. The responses to these questions suggest that a well-resourced SSO with a sophisticated and evolved e-marketing orientation will employ more activities for a greater number of aims, than a less resourced SSO with a less evolved e-marketing orientation (Chaffey et al., 2006; Shaltoni, 2006).

Interview responses supported the existing literature and the theories put forward in the conceptual framework. All of the SSOs utilised the IMC activities to inform, persuade and motivate the community into adopting favourable perceptions and actions towards the organisation. Providing information, engaging with the community, revenue raising and raising awareness and profile, were all identified as goals of the SSOs and all are true to the definition of the goals of IMC activities identified by Masterman and Wood (2006) and Bulut et al. (2012).

The main three activities of social media, website and CRM, and database management, were all integrated within SSO activity (to a high level by SSO1 and SSO2 and to a medium level by SSO3), with all being used essentially for the same purposes. E-
commerce was used to a high level by SSO1 and SSO2, and a medium level by SSO3. Each SSOs primary goal for e-commerce was revenue raising, which conforms to existing knowledge of the activity.

Social media, website use and CRM, and database marketing, are represented as the major activities used by sport organisations (Shilbury et al., 2017), providing support for the suggested throughputs/activities posited in the conceptual framework. This framework identified that capacities or resources will determine the range of activities employed and the uses of them. The major resources identified were staff numbers, money, and leadership/people, and these resources were considered in the development of the framework for further analysis.

Broadcast through digital channels was employed to a higher level by SSO1, and to a lower level by the other participating SSOs. The use of broadcast was primarily to engage with their community, although SSO1 did acknowledge the commercial opportunities it can bring. Online auctioning was not used or in the process of being implemented by any SSOs for revenue raising, and other activities included in the list were not activated or implemented by any of the SSOs.

4.4.3. Discussion of Objectives of Organisation IMC Service Delivery

The goals or outcomes SSOs seek from IMC are communication based in the form of raising awareness or enhancing perception of a product or service, and also to produce sales based or revenue raising outcomes (Belch & Belch, 2015). Methods of achieving this are through community and member engagement, enhancing sponsor relationships, reaching new members or fans, and attracting sponsors through increasing the sports profile (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Belch & Belch, 2015). Four outputs, communication, engagement,
viewership, and revenue generation were synthesised from the literature review and presented as part of the conceptual framework.

4.4.4. Discussion of Organisational EMO in Regard to IMC Delivery

The IMC orientation and sophistication of the participants’ strategies were also identified. The better resourced organisations (through staff, finances, and leadership), utilised their IMC activities to develop better outcomes; increased membership numbers, enhanced sponsor relations, raised awareness and profile, and to obtain revenue. The lesser-resourced participants activated and implemented their IMC activities only to gain an increase in membership numbers and to raise revenue. Although all SSOs identified the need for a broad ranging, specific, realistic, and goal orientated IMC strategy, only two of the SSOs interviewed had already put in place plans or actions to address these aggregate areas, and only SSO1 was currently satisfied with their current position.

The e-marketing orientations of Tier Two SSOs in this research highlight differences in IMC philosophy and activities within a small, focussed group of organisations. It is suggested by Shaltoni and West (2010) that an e-marketing orientation audit would be valuable to an organisation in identifying strategies and tactics to be employed in order to take organisations from where they are now to where they want to be. Shaltoni and West (2010) state that an increase in e-marketing orientation results in two different benefits with the first “related to raising profitability through increasing revenues or cutting costs, and the second is related to improving marketing functions” (p. 1097). Shaltoni and West (2010) assessed an organisation’s performance across four components, in order to establish a clear picture of ‘where we are now’. This starting point enables an organisation to understand where it currently sits and where it needs to go to reach its desired EMO level. The SSOs in this research were asked about the current status of their EMO.
As the importance of IMC to an organisation can be measured by its EMO, the importance of IMC to Tier Two Australian SSOs was presented in Table 4.3. It is clear from the rankings of each the components, that the better resourced organisations both in financial terms and people (staff hours and leadership), rated higher on the scale of EMO. Using these rankings and investigating responses for the statements that these components are comprised of, it is possible to identify the similarities and differences between organisational performance and best practice. This supports previous findings and that of existing literature (Eagleman, 2013; Robinson & France, 2011; Winand et al., 2010), which state that both finances and people are the two most important elements/resources required for a successful IMC program.

Best practice is described by Shaltoni and West (2010) as a transformational level or advanced adoption where organisations:

1. empower themselves by using e-marketing strategy to drive corporate strategy;
2. allow customers to configure and order products online according to their specifications and;
3. display high levels of interactivity, clear and solid e-marketing strategy, and availability of enough resources.

When the above best practice aspects are compared to the EMO results from the SSOs, the areas of concern and/or in need of improvement can be quickly identified. The three SSOs have shown room for improvement across all of the elements defined by Shaltoni and West (2010) to measure organisational EMO and, as such, future IMC strategies employed should consider the above three recommendations to fully maximise potential benefits provided by the IMC function.
4.5. SUMMARY

Chapter Four investigated the organisational attitudes of the IMC services delivered by SSOs within the context of their EMO framework. IMC services delivered, evaluated, and measured by an organisation’s perceptions and applied to the EMO framework form an important part of its business operations and, as such, the EMO framework proposed by Shaltoni and West (2010) is employed as an example of best practice for use as a comparison tool.

Supporting the literature review, the data obtained from interviews with the relevant staff from the participating SSOs indicates that shortfalls in current operational practices are clearly identified and admitted to. The major reason presented for this is based on a lack of capabilities including staff and financial resources. These shortfalls are negatively impacting the ability of SSOs to provide a range of quality IMC activities. This leads to the possibility of a ‘less than best practice EMO’, and the possibility of operational goals not being achieved through IMC. This leads to inefficient and ineffective use of scarce resources by sport organisations with the potential to put important sporting and physical activity programs at risk.

Specifically, the initial stage of investigation was tasked with identifying the answers to RQ1: What digital communication/IMC strategies are adopted and implemented by Tier Two Australian SSOs? The attitudes and understanding towards IMC displayed by the participating organisations was sought. Initial results suggest that the IMC tools used by the participating organisations were primarily centred on website content, unsophisticated CRM through emails and e-newsletters, and social media activity through Facebook and Twitter. The resources required, objectives desired, and philosophies displayed towards IMC, were also identified with results reflecting some existing knowledge in this area. It was identified that SSOs effective use of IMC was limited by a lack of knowledge of the market place and
existing and potential consumers, and through minimal efforts to evaluate IMC activities and strategies employed. Untargeted communication methods were also identified with a lack of specificity in messaging delivered to consumers. This has the potential to inhibit the value of IMC services delivered to consumers, and prevent sporting organisations from fully maximising the potential to achieve desired goals. These characteristics of IMC delivered by Australian SSOs is in contrast to best practice philosophies, strategies, tools and aims as presented by Shaltoni and West (2010), and highlight the gap and disconnect between the actual IMC delivered and recommended guidelines. With this gap identified and organisation attitudes uncovered, the second component of the research aim concerning identifying whether a gap exists between organisational attitudes and consumer perceptions of IMC services can be investigated.

Initial data and insights obtained from the interviews of SSO personnel enable some identification of, and comparisons to be made, regarding IMC activity undertaken by the SSO. These responses provide a useful insight towards developing a means of establishing the market and consumer perceptions that exist, and whether there may be a gap or disconnect between the IMC service delivered and the needs and wants of the consumers. Table 4.4 summarises these findings with all SSOs investigated reporting the use social media for community engagement and information sharing with the goals of driving increased membership and participation, enhanced public awareness and increased revenue from outside sources including sponsorship and other commercial opportunities. The focus of the IMC messages delivered by the organisations provide the input to the conceptual framework proposed, with information and interaction aims closely aligning with models selected from the literature review as the foundation for the conceptual framework developed within this study. This is apparent with the behavioural intentions sought by the SSOs reflecting those identified by Boyle & Magnusson (2007), Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang (2011)
and Park & Kim, (2000) and again, employed in the conceptual framework. This alignment between findings from the qualitative component of the investigation and the literature review further justify the inclusion of these components in the quantitative phase of the study.

*Table 4.4 Summary of SSO interviews relevant to conceptual framework.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media</th>
<th>Goals and focus of use.</th>
<th>Behavioural intentions sought through IMC.</th>
<th>SSO1 Level of Use</th>
<th>SSO2 Level of Use</th>
<th>SSO3 Level of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>Community engagement and information</td>
<td>Increase membership numbers, enhance sponsors relations, raise awareness and profile, and obtain direct revenue.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community engagement and information, stakeholder interactions</td>
<td>Increase membership numbers, enhance sponsors relations, raise awareness and profile, and obtain direct revenue.</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Med</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the SSO perceptions of IMC investigated, and using the EMO framework further, chapter five focusses on the consumer perceptions of the IMC services delivered. These perceptions were measured using online surveys, with the results compared and contrasted to the organisational perceptions. This approach enables gaps or disconnects between the expected service and perceived service to be identified.
5.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five outlines the scale development and pilot testing of items used to create constructs and measurement models for use in the final survey and conceptual framework, including the descriptive statistics obtained from the consumer surveys employing these scale items. The first part of this Chapter employs pilot study data and techniques to provide the tools for investigating the sport bodies participating in this research, and the second part uses data obtained from these participating organisations. The framework developed is derived from existing models developed in professional sport, not for profit sport and general marketing contexts (Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011; Boyle & Magnusson (2007); Park & Kim, 2000). The framework consists of five concepts; Functional Benefit, Experiential Benefit, Satisfaction, Relationship Quality and Behavioural Intentions, which were refined through the pilot into a set of items to be incorporated into a survey.

Measurement of consumer perception, service quality, relationship quality, consumer attitudes, and consumer intentions, were combined according to findings outlined in the literature review. The intention was to develop a survey tool to disseminate online to members and participants of the three SSOs. The survey was developed from current literature and refined through a pilot study process to identify and refine suitable scale items.

The process undertaken was based on Churchill’s (1979) suggested method, involving a multi-stage process where the constructs were initially defined and operationalised, then subsequently applied to the relevant context being investigated, and finally refined using a range of tools including academic panels and pilot studies. Refinement through an academic panel, then a pilot study of Deakin University students, and finally development of the survey
occurred. Through the process undertaken, minimal construct purification was required given
the employment of existing constructs. Any instances where the process was different to this
was noted, highlighting any differences to constructs and scale items employed.

Chapter Five introduces and develops the measurement models, the scale items, and
constructs they form. These results are summarised, through presentation of descriptive
statistics and cross case analysis, in order to gain insights into the thinking of consumers
towards IMC.

5.2. MEASUREMENT MODEL AND CONSTRUCT DEFINITION AND
DEVELOPMENT

5.2.1. Overview

Previous research by Park and Kim (2000) and Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011)
investigated the role of social network websites in developing a consumer-brand relationship.
They proposed a structural model to outline and quantify these relationships, and the factors
influencing them. The relationships observed, involved an assessment of the sport
organisations websites, and sport consumers satisfaction of the website quality. These
previous studies highlighted two overarching constructs measuring consumer perception of
service quality; functional benefit and experiential benefit. The authors posited that these two
components were integral in the investigation and measurement of user perceptions towards
both social networks and websites that are used for communication, both in a sporting context
and a general consumer based context. As this research aims to investigate the relationship
between the IMC delivered by SSOs, and the service quality of the strategies and activities
employed, both functional and experiential elements of the benefits provided were included.
While functional and experiential constructs were initially identified, other constructs emerged for consideration. Consumer satisfaction through service quality is introduced and represented in the analysis. Customer satisfaction is a salient effect which exerts influence over a number of critical consumer behaviours, including loyalty, retention, participation and complaints processes (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Kotler, 1979; Kwon, Trail & Anderson, 2005). Relationship quality features as a higher order latent construct comprised of five related but distinct dimensions; intimacy, loyalty, trust, reciprocity and commitment (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Kim, Trail & Ko 2011). The final construct is behavioural intentions. These intentions can be categorised into four aspects depending on the goals or aims of their use. These four aspects are; communication, engagement, viewership, and revenue generation. General marketing knowledge supports these objectives as promotional aims (Belch & Belch, 2015). Each component is presented in turn.

5.2.2. Experiential Benefits

Experiential benefits, as suggested by Park and Kim (2000, p. 200) “represent affective emotional benefits which satisfy hedonic needs for sensory pleasure”. Experiential benefits are often represented as social and hedonic benefits (Chitturi et al., 2008; Crowley et al., 1992; Park & Kim, 2000).

The experiential benefit construct was initially derived from Dhalakia (2009), and Chen & Chen (2010), and explored the importance of social aspects, building relationships with other users, enriching the life of users through the platforms provided, and the enjoyment gained from this use (Park & Kim, 2000). Park and Kim (2000) proposed five scale items to derive the experiential benefit function. These scale items underwent refinement following the process suggested by Churchill (1979), to ensure the relevance and appropriateness for use in a not for profit sporting context. Through the implementation of an
academic panel and a pilot process, following editing of keywords and language, the scale items underwent slight revision before use in the online survey. This resulted in five scale items being presented to consumers with the final measures identified in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Experiential Benefit Construct Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct &amp; Source</th>
<th>Original Measure</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation. Each Likert statement is prefixed with -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
<td>The social aspects of (#brand)’s FB page are important to me</td>
<td>ExBen1 - The social aspects provided are important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen &amp; Chen (2010); Dhalakia (2009); Park &amp; Kim (2000)</td>
<td>On (#brand)’s FB page, I get to know other people who are interested in this brand</td>
<td>ExBen2 - Through them I get to know other people who are involved in my sport and the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy the conversational interactions on (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>ExBen3 - I enjoy the conversational interactions available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy communicating with other members on (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>ExBen4 - I enjoy communicating with other members through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Browsing and/or participating in (#brand)’s FB page enriches my life</td>
<td>ExBen5 Browsing and/or participating in them enriches my life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.3. Functional Benefits

Functional, or utilitarian benefits, “refer to pragmatic and instrumental benefits of consumption offerings” (Park & Kim, 2000, p. 201). Applying this definition to the current
not for profit sporting context, functional benefits represent informational and economic benefits (Chitturi et al., 2008; Crowley et al., 1992; Park & Kim, 2000).

Functional benefits have been shown to provide a key motivation for consumers’ use of an organisation’s offerings in the digital sphere (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Parasuraman et al., 1990; Park & Kim, 2000), due to the tangible outcomes the user experiences from these actions. The functional benefit construction, sub-dimensions and scale items included in the online survey were derived from items used previously in similar research contexts. These research contexts allowed the consideration of the constructs to deem whether they were appropriate for inclusion in developing the conceptual framework.

Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011) introduced and defined the following components of the functional benefit construct, while outlining their importance to the investigation of the sport website – consumer relationship context. The five components defined and measured by Hur, Ko, & Valacich (2011) were derived from earlier work carried out by the Hur, Ko and Claussen (2011) and Parasuraman et al. (1985) works on the SERVQUAL instrument. In this case, the quality of service provided to consumers was conceptualised as a construct comprising five dimensions; reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibility. Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011) then integrated relevant literature from the sporting context, marketing, information systems and retailing (Janda, Trocchia & Gwinner, 2002; Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011; Negash, Ryan & Igbaria, 2003; Wang et al., 2003), to refine the construct and how it is operationalised. The following sub-dimensions; information, interaction, design, system reliability and fulfilment of needs, were employed to measure service quality of websites and digital media. The scale items were refined from these previous works, and are presented in Table 5.2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct &amp; Source</th>
<th>Original scale item</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation. Each Likert statement is prefixed with - Consider your SSO’s IMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Benefit</strong> Hur, Ko &amp; Valacich (2011); Hur, Ko &amp; Claussen (2011)</td>
<td>-website is a very useful source of information</td>
<td>Inf1 - The information provided is useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information provided by (#brand)’s FB page is valuable</td>
<td>Inf2 - The information provided is valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On (#brand)’s FB page, there are good features that help me accomplish my tasks</td>
<td><em>Not used, does not define construct</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information contained on – website is rich in detail</td>
<td>Inf4 - The information provided is rich in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information contained on – website provides a wide range of information</td>
<td>Inf5 - The information provided covers a wide range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Quality</strong></td>
<td>I can learn something valuable by interacting with other fans in -website</td>
<td>Int1 - I can learn something valuable by interacting with others through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can count on –web managers to be friendly</td>
<td>Int2 - I can count on the staff to be friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-web managers recognise and deal with my needs promptly</td>
<td>Int3 - The managers recognise and deal with my special needs promptly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Quality</strong></td>
<td>It is easy to navigate around and find what I want at -website</td>
<td>Des1 - It is easy to navigate around and find what I need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The layout of the team’s website is attractive</td>
<td>Des2 - The layout and format of them is attractive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-website is visually appealing</td>
<td>Des3 - They are visually appealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design Quality</strong></td>
<td>-website is error-free</td>
<td>Sys1 - They are error free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel like my privacy is protected at -website</td>
<td>Sys2 - I feel like my privacy is protected using them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Information quality is posited by Hur, Ko and Claussen (2011) and Lavie and Tractinsky (2004) as the consumers perception of a sports websites quality of information / content. This dimension considers the depth (completeness) of the information provided, and considers the width or breadth of this information in providing a complete picture of the subject covered by the website’s content (Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011). The usefulness or appropriateness of the information is also considered and measured, with the inclusion of scale items. Measuring the consumer’s perception of the relevance, timeliness and accuracy of the information provided in the content is important, as these factors increase the tangible outcomes of consuming this information, thus increasing its utility for consumers and driving repeated consumption of this content (Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011; Lavie & Tractinsky, 2004; Li et al., 2007; Parasuramnan et al., 1988).

Interaction quality examines the interaction or communication between the IMC services provided by the sport organisation and the consumer. This interaction includes, ‘one to many’ interactions provided by website content being disseminated by the organisation to the consumers, the ‘one to one’ interactions facilitated by the organisation, where the sporting body and individual users communicate in the form of direct messages, and the ‘many to many’ interactions between all stakeholders where the organisation is not the only provider of content or value, and this content can be co-created by individual or multiple users (Hur, Ko
This co-creation of content and ‘many to many’ interactions can evolve to form communities, providing an environment for further content co-creation and communication between those parties involved.

Interaction quality has been suggested to be an antecedent to increased cohesion between the organisation and consumers and, as such, is an important determinant for both further website use (Seo & Green, 2008), and an increase in perception of IMC quality and, as a result, relationship quality (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Seo & Green, 2008). Resulting from this, interaction quality, measured as an organisation’s ability to react to, and to satisfy the needs and wants of consumers through providing an environment where consumers believe they can communicate as an equal, is an important element in determining the overall quality of IMC service quality.

Design quality is used to measure the ease of use and aesthetic qualities presented by the sport organisations’ IMC offerings (Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011). The sub-dimension ‘ease of use’ aims to measure consumer perceptions of the ease of navigation of the IMC tools and the user friendliness of these (Flavián, Guinaliu & Gurrea, 2006; Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011), while the aesthetics sub-dimension identifies consumer perceptions of the visual appeal and physical features of the digital tools provided (Flavian et al., 2006; Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011; Van der Heijden, 2003). The overall dimension design quality has been posited to be a key factor in encouraging internet use amongst consumers, and subsequently enhancing relationships between consumers and IMC providers, leading to increased positive functional benefits for the sporting bodies offering IMC (Flavian et al., 2006; Hur, Ko, Valacich, 2011; Seo & Green, 2008; Van der Heijden, 2003).

The final dimension identifying consumer perceptions regarding functional benefits is system quality. System quality is concerned with the ability of an organisation’s IMC tools to
deliver information, and facilitate communication in a safe and reliable manner (Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011; Ruzic et al., 2012). This reflects the sub-dimensions security and privacy, and reliability. Security and privacy refers to the consumers’ perception of the possible risks involved in the use of IMC, and the provider’s ability to minimise these risks. These risks are usually concerned with personal or financial information being stolen or misused, and has been suggested to be an inhibitor in the use of websites and IMC tools especially the purchasing of goods or services through e-commerce (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; O’Neil, 2001). Adding to this, security factors have been shown to be critical in determining the use of digital tools, including websites and social media applications in a number of contexts (Featherman & Pavlou, 2003; O’Neil, 2001; Swinyard & Smith, 2003). An increased perception of user information regarding security, leads to increased use of electronic platforms and IMC tools. This results in increased engagement and improved relationship quality, leading to a range of functional organisational benefits. The second component of system quality, reliability, refers to the ability of the organisations IMC tools and strategies to deliver a high-quality service consistently, and with a high degree of dependability (Hur, Ko, & Valacich, 2014; Liu & Shrum, 2002; Negash et al., 2013).

5.2.4. Satisfaction

Satisfaction provides a mediating factor between the consumer perceptions and the general relationship dimension. Consumer satisfaction through service quality has a salient effect, exerting influence on a number of critical consumer behaviours. Consumer satisfaction has been shown to; increase consumer loyalty leading to retention of consumers (Van Leeuwen, Quick & Daniel, 2002; Kim, Ko & James, 2011); decrease instances of complaint or complaint behaviour (Kotler, 1979); increase participation behaviours including attendance intentions (Kwon, Trail & Anderson, 2005) and; lead to positive word of mouth (Kotler,
All of these elements provide an antecedent to a range of positive functional behaviours.

In the non-profit sport context, where the goals of organisations include increases in participation, revenue derived from consumption activities, awareness of the sport and its programs, and public perception, the importance of high levels of consumer satisfaction are evident. Sport consumer satisfaction has been conceptualised into three categories; game satisfaction, service satisfaction, and a mixture of both game and service satisfaction (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Yoshida & James, 2010). This thesis focusses on the delivery of IMC services, and therefore the service satisfaction sub-dimension is most relevant and appropriate for researching. The relationship that satisfaction has with other constructs was determined, and the overall impact on consumer behaviours and relationship quality was measured.

Service satisfaction, as posited in previous research (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Tsuji, Bennett & Zhang, 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010), focuses on the ability of product quality and service environment quality to effect consumer satisfaction levels. It is a measurement of consumers’ subjective perception, and evaluation of, service performance, and therefore the performance of the sport organisations ability to deliver functional and experiential benefits through its IMC strategies and tools (Kim, Ko & James, 2011).

The scale items employed by Kim, Ko and James (2011) were refined to ensure they were relevant and appropriate. The final measures are listed in Table 5.3
Table 5.3 Satisfaction Construct Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct &amp; Source</th>
<th>Original scale item</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation. Each Likert statement is prefixed with -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>hurriedly, Ko &amp; Valacich (2011), Hur, Ko &amp; Claussen (2011)</td>
<td>Consider your SSO’s IMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am satisfied with my decision to use -website</td>
<td>Satis1 - I am satisfied with my decision to use them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on all of my experience with –website, I feel very satisfied</td>
<td>Satis2 - Based on my experience with them, I feel very satisfied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think I did the right thing when I decided to use -website</td>
<td>Satis3 - I think I did the right thing in using them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consumer satisfaction, due to it being a higher order construct (Oliver, 1999), proves difficult to measure fully. This is due to the complexity of its construction, and the number of possible dimensions that could be included in its construct. In the sporting context, factors such as previous history, family relationships, proximity to locations and others can also impact satisfaction levels of consumers. These other factors go beyond the scope of this research, but were mentioned as possible elements which can impact this construct, and so are identified here.

5.2.5. Relationship Quality

Relationship quality, as defined by Kim, Trail and Ko (2011) is a “meta-construct composed of several distinct but related facets such as trust, commitment, identification, intimacy, and reciprocity” (p. 577). These constructs measure the strength and depth of relationships between consumers and organisations (Fournier, 1998; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006), providing a foundation on which marketing relationship principles can be based (Gronroos, 1982; Mahoney, Madrigal & Howard, 2000). Relationship quality is
conceptualised as a higher order latent construct, comprised of five related but distinct dimensions; intimacy, loyalty, trust, reciprocity and commitment. These dimensions are supported by previous research (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011).

Studies in general marketing and in sport specific contexts (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Kwon, Trail & Anderson, 2005; Yoshida & James, 2010), highlight that increases in consumer relationship quality are an accurate predictor of consumers being more likely to display positive behaviour intentions. In a sport team – consumer relationship context, these positive behaviours were shown to increase the likelihood of consumers attending a team’s games, consuming a team’s media content, and purchasing licensed team merchandise (Kim, Ko & James, 2011). This is supported by findings in a general sport context of increases in relationship quality leading to the above positive behaviours, and in addition, an increase in participation intentions, increases in positive word of mouth and decreases of complaint behaviours (Kim, Ko & James, 2011; Kotler, 1979; Van Leeuwen, Quick, & Daniel, 2002). Although previous studies showed a positive relationship between relationship quality and behavioural intention, R-squared testing of this provided results of between 12% to 31% (Chumpitaz et al., 2005; Kim, Ko & James, 2011), indicating that while a significant positive influence exists, only between one-tenth to a third of the variance measured in these studies can be directly attributed to the relationship between the two constructs.

With respect to consumer satisfaction, the functional benefits coveted by the non-profit sport organisations, generally can be described as revenue (derived from membership or subscription fees), participation, awareness, and enhanced public perception. This supports and justifies the consideration of the use of the constructs and scale items used. These scale items were refined according to Churchill’s (1979) process, and the resulting scale items employed in the online survey are presented in Table 5.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct &amp; Source</th>
<th>Original scale item</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation. Each Likert statement is prefixed with - Consider your SSO's IMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty</strong></td>
<td>Copulsky &amp; Wolf, (1990); Hur, Ko &amp; Valacich, (2011); Hur, Ko &amp; Claussen, (2011); Park &amp; Kim, (2000)</td>
<td>Logo1 - The organisation's website and IMC activities make an effort to increase customer loyalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(#brand) makes efforts to increase customer’s loyalty</td>
<td>Loy2 - The organisation's website and IMC tools make various efforts to improve its ties with its customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(#brand) makes various efforts to improve its tie with customers</td>
<td>Loy3 - The organisation is concerned with keeping members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(#brand) really cares about keeping customers</td>
<td>Loy4 - I have repeatedly found the organisation's website and IMC tools better than others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have repeatedly found – website is better than others</td>
<td>Loy5 - I always continue to favour the offerings of the organisation's website and IMC tools before others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I always continue to favour the offering of – website before others</td>
<td>Loy6 - I always choose to use the organisation's website and IMC tools in preference to others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I always choose to use – website in preference to others</td>
<td>*Not used, does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>Boyle &amp; Magnusson (2007); Kim, Ko &amp; James, (2011); Kim, Trail, Woo &amp; Zhang (2011)</td>
<td>Recip1 - The organisation pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The team A pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them</td>
<td>Recip2 - The organisation constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The team A constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them</td>
<td>Recip3 - The organisation would notice if I did something that benefitted the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Boyle and Magnusson (2007);</td>
<td>*Not used, does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim, Ko &amp; James, (2011): Kim, Trail, Woo &amp; Zhang (2011)</td>
<td>I trust the <em>team name</em></td>
<td>Trust1 - I trust the organisation completely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can count on the team A</td>
<td>Trust2 - I can count on the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The team A is reliable</td>
<td>Trust3 - The organisation is reliable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisation has integrity</td>
<td>Trust4 - The organisation has integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment</strong> Boyle and Magnusson (2007); Kim, Ko &amp; James, (2011): Kim, Trail, Woo &amp; Zhang (2011)</td>
<td>I feel involved with the <em>team name</em></td>
<td>Commit1 - I feel involved with the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I defend the <em>team name</em> in front of friends</td>
<td><em>Not used, does not define construct</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am proud to be a member of the <em>team name</em></td>
<td>Commit3 - I am proud to be a member of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am devoted to the <em>team name</em></td>
<td><em>Not used, does not define construct</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am dedicated to the <em>team name</em></td>
<td>Commit6 - I am dedicated to the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am committed to the <em>team name</em></td>
<td>Commit7 - I am committed to the organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The scale items generated were condensed into the five sub-dimensions listed previously; intimacy, commitment, trust, reciprocity, and loyalty and each is discussed.

Intimacy, as posited by Fournier (1998) and Peterson (1995), is conceptualised as the degree of familiarity, closeness, and openness to relationships within the consumer-organisation dynamic. Kim and Trail (2011), and Kim, Trail and Ko (2011), highlight previous studies where empirical support was found, suggesting that a high level of intimacy is essential in successful relationship marketing (Copulsky & Wolf, 1990; Fournier, 1998; Palmatier et al., 2006). Kim and Trail (2011) and Kim, Trail and Ko (2011) also demonstrated the positive effects of intimacy in a sporting context through empirically proving “when psychological familiarity, closeness, and openness between sports consumers and the organization exist, sports consumers are more likely to attend games, follow team related information through media and purchase team licensed merchandise” (p. 579).

In essence, in a sport context, the intimacy construct has been shown to positively influence word of mouth, media consumption, licensed product consumption, and attendance behaviours, and as these align closely with the desired functional benefits of a sporting organisation specifically, and non-profit organisations generally, the intimacy construct and scale items refined to measure it are relevant and appropriate for inclusion.

Commitment was also shown to have significantly influenced each of the three sport consumption behaviours; media consumption, attendance intentions, and purchasing of products and services (Kim & Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011). The specific construct, commitment, was found to be responsible for the greatest variance in attendance intentions and media consumption behaviours (Kim & Trail, 2011), when compared to the other domain specific relationship quality constructs of trust, loyalty, and reciprocity. In the current research context, commitment is defined as the strength of a relationship between the
consumer and the organisation through the commitment of both parties to the relationship (Funk & Pritchard, 2006; Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2009). Morgan and Hunt (1994) support this by defining commitment as “an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes that relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely” (p. 23). This strength of relationship results in positive, immediate organisational benefits (Kim & Trail, 2011), but also are suggested to produce medium to long term benefits to organisations, through the consumers choosing products and services from the organisations which they feel committed to.

Trust, the third specific domain construct included, has been suggested to be the most critical element of creating and maintaining sustainable beneficial outcomes for both the organisation and the consumer (Bulut, 2012; Funk & James, 2006; Gronroos, 1982; Kim & Trail, 2011; Law et al., 2004). Morgan and Hunt (1994) state that “trust is based on a judgement that the relationship partner is reliable and has high integrity” (p. 294). As a consequence, a consumer’s trust in an organisation can be defined as the confidence in the quality and reliability of the service or product offered by an organisation (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Kim & Trail, 2011). Funk and James (2006) add to this by suggesting sport consumers possessing high levels of trust with an organisation are more likely to display future purchase intentions. This was supported by Kim and Trail (2011) and Kim, Trail and Ko (2011), where trust was measured to have a significant impact on both merchandise and media consumption.

Reciprocity is based on the principle of “when one benefits from another, the recipient should return the favour in proportion to what the other has done for him or her” (Kim & Trail, 2011, p. 577). Cialdini et al. (1995) adds to this by explaining the importance of reciprocity, with the assertion that it is a vital norm of human culture, and one which is
essential to the development of transactions and relations that form the basis of human society. In a sport context, the relationship between a consumer and sport organisation continues only if both parties experience a balanced relation in the exchange of benefits and costs (Howard & Crompton, 2004; Kim & Trail, 2011), and also when consumers are appreciated in return for their investment in the organisation (Copulsky & Wolf, 1990; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011). This reciprocity of attitudes and intentions can lead to a strong and successful relationship, where both parties achieve positive relationship outcomes.

Kim, Trail and Ko (2011), and Kim and Trail (2011), identified that reciprocity did not have an effect on the variance of relationship quality towards behavioural intentions displayed by consumers. However, the reciprocity construct should be considered, due to the significant effect it exerts on the general relationship measurement and, through this, the effects on behavioural intentions measured through the general construct. Kim and Trail (2011) highlight this, showing reciprocity having significant factor loadings on the scale items comprising the general relationship quality construct. As such, reciprocity can be suggested to be a significant driver and also a predictor of important consumption behaviours in the sporting context.

Loyalty is the final sub-dimension investigated with respect to the quality construct. The creation of consumer loyalty is shown to be one of the most sought-after goals of sporting organisations, due to its ability to be not only an important business tool, but also an indicator of the success of an organisation in a competitive environment (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2014; Oliver, 1999; Parasuman et al., 2004). Oliver (1999) defines loyalty as the intention “to rebuy or repatronise a preferred product or service consistently in the future” (p. 34). This research focusses on the IMC delivered by sporting organisations, allowing the use of e-loyalty definitions to be conceptualised. E-loyalty is posited by Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011) and Kim and Trail (2011), to positively influence long term profitability of
organisations through word of mouth, decreased complaint behaviours, and also increased purchase intentions. Kim, James & Kim (2013) add that high levels of e-loyalty provide an accurate prediction of, and have a significant relationship with, consumer satisfaction, through being an antecedent to positive behavioural intentions. This includes recommending the organisation to others, repeat consumption of products and services, and positive word of mouth.

5.2.6. Behavioural Intentions

Behavioural intentions can be categorised into four groups depending on the goals or aims of their use. The four groups are; perception, awareness, participation and revenue generation. General marketing knowledge supports these objectives as promotional aims. Belch and Belch (2015) state that the aims of promotional strategies should be based on communication in the form of raising awareness or enhancing perception of a product or service, and also produce sales based or revenue raising outcomes. These four behavioural intentions, or functional outcomes, are critical to the operation and success of sporting organisations and specifically non-profit sport bodies (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Winand, 2010).

Scale items employed to conceptualise and measure the constructs were refined in a multi-stage process according to Churchill’s (1979) suggestions. These scale items are outlined in Table 5.5. The previous constructs, experiential benefits, functional benefits, satisfaction, and relationship quality, all lead to the behavioural intentions of consumers. These intentions as listed are defined in the context of this investigation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct &amp; Source</th>
<th>Original scale item</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation. Each Likert statement is prefixed with - Consider your SSO’s IMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception</strong></td>
<td>I have recommended (#brand)’s FB page to lots of people</td>
<td>Perc1 - I have recommended them to lots of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copulsky &amp; Wolf (1990); Kim, Ko &amp; James (2011); Park &amp; Kim (2000)</td>
<td>I ‘talk up’ (#brand)’s FB page to my friends</td>
<td>Perc2 - I ‘talk them up’ to my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I try to spread the good word about (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>Perc3 - I try to spread the good word about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I give (#brand)’s FB page lots of positive word-of-mouth advertising</td>
<td>Perc4 - I give them lots of positive word of mouth advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Awareness</strong></td>
<td>I will track the news on the (team name) through the media (e.g., TV, Internet, Radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Awar1 - I will track the news of the sport and the organisation through the media, both traditional and digital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copulsky &amp; Wolf (1990); Kim, Trail &amp; Ko (2011); Park &amp; Kim (2000)</td>
<td>I will watch or listen to the (team name)’s game(s) through the media (e.g., TV, internet, radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Awar2 - I will read, watch and listen to stories related to the sport and the organisation in the media, both traditional and digital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will support the (team name) by watching and listening to (team name)’s games through the media (e.g., TV, internet, radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Awar3 - I will support the organisation by following stories about the sport and the organisation through the media, both digital and traditional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation</strong></td>
<td>I will seek out the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Part1 - I will seek out activities and programs provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copulsky &amp; Wolf (1990); Kim, Ko &amp; James (2011); Kim, Trail &amp; Ko (2011); Park &amp; Kim (2000)</td>
<td>I intend to try out the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Part2 - I intend to try out activities and programs provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I intend to attend the (team name)’s game(s)</td>
<td>Part3 - I intend to attend and/or participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that I will attend the (team name)’s game(s) in the future is high</td>
<td>Part4 - The likelihood that I will attend/participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation is high.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will attend the (team name)’s game(s) in the future</td>
<td>Part5 - I will attend/participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation in the future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Revenue**

Copulsky & Wolf (1990); Kim, James & Kim (2013); Kim, Trail & Ko (2011); Park & Kim (2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am willing to buy the product/service of this firm</th>
<th>Rev1 - I am willing to purchase the services/products of the organisation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to try the product/service of this firm</td>
<td><em>Not used, overlaps with item Part2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to purchase (team name)’s licensed merchandise in the future</td>
<td>Rev2 - I am likely to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, purchasing (team name) licensed merchandise is something I plan to do</td>
<td>Rev3 - In the future purchasing services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation is something I plan to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, I intend to purchase licensed merchandise representing the (team name)</td>
<td>Rev4 - In the future, I intend to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perception, as defined by Copulsky and Wolf (1990), is closely related to positive word of mouth. Positive word of mouth provides unsolicited promotion of an organisation’s products or services to the public. With the message being provided by a third party, increased credibility is achieved through increasing the public perception of an organisation and its offerings (Copulsky & Wolf, 1990). Perception concerns the positive word of mouth spread by existing consumers of services provided by the sport bodies, in order to raise the public perception and possibly drive consumption choices by the public.

Awareness can be closely linked to sport media consumption as conceptualised by Kim, Trail and Ko (2011). These authors posit that increased awareness through media
channels increases the relationship quality between the consumer and the organisation. This enhancement of relationship leads to increased consumption intentions from the consumers, manifested in the purchase of merchandise or services provided.

Participation is one of the most important objectives for a not for profit sporting organisation (Kim, Trail & Ko 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). With a majority of income derived from participation in events and activities, it is a critical outcome of performance. Participation can occur in single instances, or more than once, and is often an antecedent to membership of a sporting club or organisation. Participation and membership not only provide direct revenue to a sporting body, but also can allow access to public funding grants for providing services to the community.

Revenue is derived from the licensed merchandise consumption proposed by Kim et al. (2011), to fit into the not for profit context (Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). In addition to purchasing merchandise from the sport organisation, revenue includes purchasing of tickets to events, educational resources, and coaching clinics.

5.2.7. Summary

Constructs described in existing literature were presented, and existing scale items appropriate to each area were identified and redefined / redeveloped to fit the current research. The conceptual framework proposed, and the scale items used to conceptualise these constructs, were refined in order to provide the most effective and accurate tool in measuring the inter and intra-construct relationships. The scale items were refined, and these changes were listed, the constructs and measurement model that were built from these scale items were also outlined along with their importance.
5.3. PILOT STUDY REFINEMENT OF ITEMS

The pilot study process employed to refine the scale items was introduced in Section 3.3.3.1. The full review of results are presented in Appendix A. This process initially developed scales and scale items through a literature review of general and sport specific marketing sources. Initially, five scales or constructs were developed incorporating 72 scale items being selected to test and measure these constructs. These scale items were reduced to 65 through a panel of academic experts deleting items which did not define the constructs or were duplicated. Further testing was undertaken with a pilot survey testing responses from first year Deakin University sport students. This testing saw the item list reduced to 62 scale items through statistical testing methods which were identified in Tables 5.1 – 5.5. The final items generated are listed in Table 6.12 and formed the initial set of scale items tested with the main study data.

5.4. RESULTS OF CONSUMER SURVEYS

5.4.1. Introduction

Research question one identified the IMC strategies and activities carried out by the participant SSOs. The next step was to uncover whether a gap or disconnect exists between the IMC delivered and consumer perceptions of the IMC services delivered. Through a comparison of organisational attitudes towards delivery of IMC services, and the resultant consumer perceptions of these elements of IMC delivery, any variations in perceived quality of delivery and needs or wants of consumers can be identified. This lead to Research Question 2 (RQ2) which was stated as:
RQ2. What are the consumer attitudes to IMC strategies adopted and implemented by Australian Tier 2 SSOs and what service quality of these strategies are perceived by these consumers?

Chapter Four outlined the philosophy, strategies and actions undertaken by the SSOs in their delivery of IMC. The next stage is to examine the consumer perceptions of this implementation and adoption of IMC, through the use of an online survey, with scale items drawn from proven models used widely in the sporting and relationship marketing contexts.

To fully investigate and measure consumer perception of SSO IMC delivery, the consumers or SSO members and participants firstly need to be identified. To achieve this, the online questionnaire was distributed to members and participants of the investigated sport organisations. Responses to the survey numbered over 1000 participants (n=1130) in the overall data set, and over 300 in the individual SSO samples (SSO1 n=351, SSO2 n=323, SSO3 n=456). This sample underwent an investigation to measure the perceptions of IMC, in order to identify if any patterns of consumer perceptions were apparent. This occurred through segmenting the sample into a range of user groups including demographic segmentation, sport use segmentation, and internet use segmentation, all of which are discussed.

The demographic categories employed in this testing included SSO affiliation, gender, age, participation type, level and experience, and internet usage levels. The undifferentiated nature of IMC delivery was recognised by the SSOs as an inhibitor to the effective and efficient use of IMC, therefore data showing differences of consumer perceptions based on user type can be utilised to refine and tailor IMC delivery to the groups to fully leverage the benefits IMC can provide. Initially, data analysis provides demographic and scale item
measurement and discussion, and this is followed by statistical ANOVA and T-tests being employed, where constructs were measured and compared amongst user groups and SSOs.

5.5. DEMOGRAPHICS, SPORT PARTICIPATION AND INTERNET/IMC USE

A demographic breakdown of the survey participants is presented. Key characteristics include a breakdown of gender, age range and sport participation. Internet usage of the survey participants, where general usage and sport usage was identified, was followed by an assessment of platforms types accessed.

5.5.1. Demographics

Table 5.6 provides a summary of the demographic profile of the sample of consumer respondents. The overall results indicate similar demographic profiles across each SSO. There is an even split of gender, with slightly more male respondents in total across the SSOs, ranging between 50.6% to 52.6% for males and 47.4% to 49.4% for females. Survey respondents were categorised into five age groups based on common practice of the SSOs involved and also relevant, similar studies (MacLean & Hamm, 2008; Nicholson et al., 2010). The 26-35 age group represented most of survey respondents across all organisations, with the under 18 and over 51 categories providing the least number of respondents.

Participation or involvement in a sporting organisation can occur under a number of forms. Athletes, coaches, volunteers and parents all are actively involved in the sport and respondents came from each category, although very clearly the core group was represented by the athlete category providing 98% of participants. Some people actually play multiple roles in the organisation which may impact the high percentage of people who identify as athletes. The respondents indicate that the majority of their participation is at the social level, with approximately 80% of respondents stating this. A small percentage of respondents
Participate at the junior, senior and elite levels, and some participants were active in more than one participation level, resulting in some percentages recording above 100%.

Participation hours per week measured the amount of time a respondent committed to relevant sporting activities within their chosen organisation. These activities included participating and competing in games/events, training, and officiating and volunteering. Time spent in transit or on other activities including internet use were not included in the participation categories. The majority of respondents were involved in their chosen SSO for between 5.5 – 7 hours a week, with an average of one in every three participating at this level. The majority of respondents participate for in excess of 5.5 hours per week for all three SSOs.

The average respondent indicated that they had been involved in their chosen sport for between three to six years. This was one area where some more noticeable differences appeared across the three sports, with SSO3 possessing a large number of participants fairly new to the sport with only 1-3 years of exposure, while SSO1 displayed that almost one in three participants in their sport had been involved for over 10 years. These differences could be attributed to the long history of SSO1 being provided at a school and social level in Australia, alongside the easily modifiable nature of the game, whereas SSO3 had recent success on the world stage and an increasing public spotlight, thereby possibly attracting new participation and interest in the sport.

Table 5.6 Demographic Profile of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall (n)</th>
<th>SSO1 (n)</th>
<th>SSO2 (n)</th>
<th>SSO3 (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51.7% (584)</td>
<td>51.3% (166)</td>
<td>50.6% (178)</td>
<td>52.6% (240)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>48.3% (546)</td>
<td>48.7% (157)</td>
<td>49.4% (173)</td>
<td>47.4% (216)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>3.9% (44)</td>
<td>7.1% (23)</td>
<td>6.2% (21)</td>
<td>6.6% (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5.5.2. Internet and IMC Use Patterns

Alongside the demographic profiles, the internet use of respondents was also measured. General internet use per day, sport specific internet use, and IMC purpose is presented in Table 5.7, followed by a summary of internet use being provided in Table 5.8.
Over half of the respondents indicate a general internet usage exceeding 2.1 hours, which was consistent across all three SSOs and broadly reflects that of society in general (Baggio et al., 2016; Tokunaga & Rains, 2016). A third of respondents indicated that their internet usage ranged from between 0.6 – 1.5 hours, but very few indicated a lower than 0.5-hour response.

General sport use relates to internet use of the survey participants accessing sport online. This relates to any sport access undertaken by the respondents, whether specific to their SSO or any other sport they are interested in. Approximately 60% of respondents indicated they viewed sport online for somewhere between 0.6 – 1.5 hours per day, with the 0.6 hours to 1 hour per day timeframe resulting in the greatest response.

The chosen sport internet use measured the amount of time survey participants spend online consuming IMC from the SSO that they are involved with. This use could be for any purpose including information, entertainment, conversation or community activities and e-commerce actions. Respondents reported that they access their SSO online information for less than 1.5 hours per day (approximately 80%), with over a third accessing between 0 – 0.5 hours per day.

The internet use of the survey participants was segregated into five distinct categories based on the aims of the internet use. These were classified as: information, interaction, education, entertainment and e-commerce. Information use included fixturing, results, ladders, and team details, and 90% of respondents indicated they access the SSOs website in order to get information. Education represented approximately half of the reason behind accessing the SSO website, with e-commerce accounting for approximately a third of responses.
Interestingly, interaction featured in approximately a quarter of SSO1 and SSO1 responses, but less than 10% of SSO3 responses, which may be an indicator of the requirements of these consumers for a certain experience, or alternatively the inability of the SSO to provide interactive web materials (in the case of SSO3). Very few users indicate that they access the SSO website for entertainment which is not a surprise as this is unlikely a core reason for the SSO website being available to them. Totals exceed 100% as respondents were able to acknowledge more than one response in order to ascertain as broad a range of responses to the question.

Table 5.7 Internet Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall (n)</th>
<th>SSO1 (n)</th>
<th>SSO2 (n)</th>
<th>SSO3 (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Internet Use Daily</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 0.5 hours</td>
<td>3.0% (34)</td>
<td>1.3% (4)</td>
<td>2.1% (8)</td>
<td>4.8% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.6 – 1 hours</td>
<td>9.1% (103)</td>
<td>8.4% (27)</td>
<td>7.6% (27)</td>
<td>10.7% (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 - 1.5 hours</td>
<td>14.9% (169)</td>
<td>15.3% (49)</td>
<td>12.9% (45)</td>
<td>16.4% (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 – 2 hours</td>
<td>18.2% (206)</td>
<td>19.8% (64)</td>
<td>20.9% (74)</td>
<td>14.9% (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 - 2.5 hours</td>
<td>20.2% (229)</td>
<td>21.1% (68)</td>
<td>19.8% (69)</td>
<td>20.2% (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 2.5 hours</td>
<td>34.4% (389)</td>
<td>34.1% (110)</td>
<td>36.7% (129)</td>
<td>32.9% (150)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| General Sport Internet Use Daily |
| 0 - 0.5 hours        | 29.6% (334) | 27.9% (90) | 28.6% (100) | 31.6% (144) |
| 0.6 – 1 hours        | 37.8% (428) | 35.5% (115) | 37.4% (131) | 39.9% (182) |
| 1.1 - 1.5 hours      | 23.1% (261) | 24.1% (78) | 24.7% (87) | 21.1% (96) |
| 1.6 – 2 hours        | 5.1% (58)   | 6.3% (20) | 5.1% (18) | 4.4% (20) |
| 2.1 - 2.5 hours      | 2.7% (30)   | 3.8% (12) | 2.6% (9) | 2.0% (9) |
| Over 2.5 hours       | 1.7% (19)   | 2.4% (8) | 1.6% (6) | 1.0% (5) |

| Chosen Sport Internet Use Daily |
| 0 - 0.5 hours        | 38.2% (432) | 35.3% (114) | 36.5% (128) | 41.7% (190) |
| 0.6 – 1 hours        | 32.4% (366) | 31.6% (102) | 30.9% (108) | 34.2% (156) |
| 1.1 - 1.5 hours      | 21.4% (242) | 22.9% (74) | 24.2% (85) | 18.2% (83) |
| 1.6 – 2 hours        | 4.7% (53)   | 5.1% (16) | 4.8% (17) | 4.4% (20) |
| 2.1 - 2.5 hours      | 1.9% (22)   | 3.1% (10) | 2.3% (8) | 0.9% (4) |
| Over 2.5 hours       | 1.2% (14)   | 2.0% (6) | 1.3% (5) | 0.7% (3) |
Frequency of sport IMC use is presented in Table 5.8 using a scale where 0 = never, 1 = once a week, 2 = every day, and 3 = more than once a day. This means that a result of 2.41 represents IMC use of the respondent as being between every day and more than once a day. Social networks, which are represented by social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter were accessed by respondents at least every day, and in the case of SSO1 (2.55) and SSO2 (2.65), a majority of respondents accessed more than once per day on average. A similar experience occurred with website content access scores exceeding 2.3 for all SSOs, again indicating consumers accessing the website of the SSOs more than once per day. The remaining IMC tools showed moderate usage of between once a week and every day.

Table 5.8 Frequency of Sport IMC Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMC purpose</th>
<th>Overall SSO</th>
<th>SSO1</th>
<th>SSO2</th>
<th>SSO3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>90.1% (1017)</td>
<td>90.2% (291)</td>
<td>88.7% (311)</td>
<td>91.1% (415)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>50.0% (565)</td>
<td>52.9% (171)</td>
<td>46.4% (163)</td>
<td>50.8% (231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>13.4% (152)</td>
<td>14.0% (45)</td>
<td>14.6% (51)</td>
<td>12.4% (56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>18.6% (210)</td>
<td>27.2% (88)</td>
<td>24.3% (85)</td>
<td>8.2% (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>34.4% (389)</td>
<td>34.1% (110)</td>
<td>32.6% (114)</td>
<td>36.7% (165)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 0 = never, 1 = once a week, 2 = every day, 3 = more than once a day

5.5.3. Summary

The typical or average respondent had a median age within the 25-40-year-old age range, was someone who mainly used social media more than once a day, and accessed sport
through these services, and sought information pertaining to their specific SSO on a regular basis. In addition to understanding the demographic profile of SSO consumers, their perceptions of IMC service were undertaken.

5.6. CONSUMER PERCEPTION SURVEY RESULTS

5.6.1. Introduction

The constructs developed for use within the conceptual framework are identified and consumer responses to the scale items within these constructs are tabled and discussed. Table 5.9 provides a summary of the consumer perceptions for the IMC services provided by the SSOs. Perceptions were measured using a 7-point Likert scale where a rating of 1 means the respondent strongly disagrees with the statement and 7 represents a statement that the respondent strongly agrees to. Survey questions were based on scale items derived from existing studies and were explained in Section 5.2. These items were phrased and worded in-line with the following example; *In the future purchasing services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation is something I plan to do.* Developed constructs are listed in bold and the sub dimensions they are comprised of are included below that construct.

Functional benefits “refer to pragmatic and instrumental benefits of consumption offerings” (Park & Kim, 2000, p. 201), and includes the sub dimensions information, interaction, design, systems and fulfilment. Experiential benefits relate to “affective emotional benefits which satisfy hedonic needs for sensory pleasure” (Park & Kim, 2000, p. 201). Satisfaction (Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010) focuses on the ability of product quality and service environment quality to effect consumer satisfaction levels. Relationship quality is classified as a measure of the strength and depth of relationships between consumers and organisations (Fournier, 1998; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006) and includes reciprocity, trust, commitment and intimacy. Behaviour
intentions are attitudes leading to future consumer actions which may be beneficial to an organisation and includes perception, awareness, participation, and revenue.

Corresponding mean and standard deviation values are identified from the data obtained. Totals for the overall data set and the individual SSOs are provided for a whole case and within case comparison. A full summary reflecting all the values obtained is presented in detail, across all constructs with accompanying information.

Table 5.9 Consumer Perception Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefit</td>
<td>4.96 (1.79)</td>
<td>5.05 (2.47)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.67)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>5.16 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.58)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>4.96 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.84)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.28)</td>
<td>4.90 (2.83)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.89 (1.88)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.36)</td>
<td>4.54 (2.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.88)</td>
<td>5.19 (2.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.77)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
<td>4.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.91 (2.01)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.93)</td>
<td>4.11 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.96 (2.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>4.71 (2.27)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.83 (2.67)</td>
<td>4.55 (2.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>4.90 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.94 (2.85)</td>
<td>5.06 (2.10)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>4.18 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.22 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.15 (1.84)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.94 (2.54)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.77)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.47)</td>
<td>4.78 (2.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.78 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.86 (2.43)</td>
<td>4.74 (2.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>4.73 (2.11)</td>
<td>4.75 (2.78)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.52)</td>
<td>4.31 (1.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intention</td>
<td>4.93 (2.02)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.92 (2.98)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>4.98 (1.74)</td>
<td>5.11 (2.39)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.83 (2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4.79 (2.09)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.77 (2.28)</td>
<td>4.80 (2.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>4.87 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.97 (2.98)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>5.01 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.22 (2.19)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6.2. Functional Benefit Perception Results

The mean score obtained for functional benefit displays approximately a 5 out of 7 for all SSOs. This indicates that it has a degree of importance to consumers, indicating high levels of consumer perception of the quality of these elements of functional benefits. These scores can lead to increased IMC use, increased engagement with the organisation and, as a result, an increase in positive behavioural intentions, including information provision, interaction opportunities, system and design quality and fulfilment of needs. Each of these sub-category scores are now identified and discussed.

5.6.2.1. Information

Consumers indicate that the information provided by the participating organisations IMC is of importance to them. Table 5.10 displays that consumers believe that information provided to them by SSOs is valuable, useful, wide ranging and rich in detail. Richness in detail scored slightly lower across all SSOs, and in particular for SSO2 and SSO3 which might reflect their lack of resourcing being available to provide all sought after information within their IMC provision. This was the case when reviewing the scores for wide-ranging, which also was lower for SSO2 and SSO3 when compared to SSO1, again suggesting that less resourcing might impact on perceptions around the information provided.

Table 5.10 Consumer Perceptions Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inf1: The information provided is useful</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>5.16 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.58)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.99)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf2: The information provided is valuable</td>
<td>5.22 (1.56)</td>
<td>5.17 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.43 (0.96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf3: The information provided is rich in detail</td>
<td>5.14 (1.04)</td>
<td>5.21 (1.42)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.26)</td>
<td>5.22 (0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inf4: The information provided is valuable</td>
<td>5.01 (1.54)</td>
<td>5.35 (0.91)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Inf5: The information provided covers a wide range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>4.74 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.02)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.25)</td>
<td>4.60 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter1: The managers recognise and deal with my special needs promptly</td>
<td>4.38 (1.02)</td>
<td>4.37 (1.09)</td>
<td>4.48 (1.09)</td>
<td>4.27 (0.96)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale item Inf3 which stated “On (#brand)’s FB page, there are good features that help me accomplish my tasks” was removed from the investigation at the pilot study stage (Appendix A) as it did not define the construct investigated.

5.6.2.2. Interaction

Interaction elements of the IMC services delivered to consumers show a high degree of consumer perception of the quality of these interactions overall. Table 5.11 displays that there were some differences with the responses in relation to the questions posed. Respondents indicated that they can count on the staff to be friendly, as well as learning from interactions with others. The response to the question referencing special needs, while still above a mean score, indicating some level of consumer perception of the quality of this element, scored less than the other two questions, and was one of the lower scores presented within the consumer perception responses (4.38). This may indicate that the response time with respect to interaction may, in fact, be lacking from the SSO, and while not receiving a negative response from consumers, it could again be reflective of the lack of resources each SSO can provide to ensure more timely interactions occur. This may overlap with comments made by SSOs which were reported in Chapter Four, where they indicated that while they might like to have a 24-hour online presence, they were currently incapable of resourcing and managing full-time and immediate responses to consumers.

Table 5.11 Consumer Perceptions Interaction
Inter2: I can count on the staff to be friendly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.89 (1.88)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.36)</td>
<td>4.54 (2.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des1: It is easy to navigate around and find what I need</td>
<td>4.82 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.15)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des2: They are visually appealing</td>
<td>4.79 (1.12)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.05)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des3: The layout and format of them is attractive</td>
<td>4.88 (1.32)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.64)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.36 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.2.3. Design

Consumer perception results focusing on design, indicate a high degree of consumer perception of the quality of the design elements and with the design construct overall, but a slightly lower level than for other functional benefit scores. As depicted in Table 5.12, SSO1 and SSO2 consumers identified that their layout and format was attractive, and while SSO3 consumers were not negative towards the attractiveness of their IMC, including the visual appearance of the organisations website, social media pages and other messaging channels, their score was much lower than that of the other two SSOs. Generally, consumers believed the design was relatively easy to navigate and was visually appealing, although SSO3 scored lower overall than the other two SSOs. This again could be a measure associated with the level of resourcing being able to ensure a higher quality design for SSO3.

Table 5.12 Consumer Perceptions Design

5.6.2.4. System

Table 5.13 relates to the security and reliability of the IMC tools employed by the organisations. There is a clear indication that there is a high level of trust associated with the
SSOs not misusing personal information. Consumers display a high level of trust in the correct use of personal information often shown as an inhibitor for increased use of IMC tools especially e-commerce applications (Ebrahimi & Hoseini, 2012; Yin, Huang, Liang & Lai, 2010), with all organisations recording mean results above five for this item. When identifying whether they believed their SSO to be error free, SSO1 and SSO2 consumers indicated that this was the case. While SSO3 consumers still reported support for this, they did so through identifying a lower level of quality in the delivery, with a substantially lower consumer perception rating reflecting that they experienced more errors within this service than consumers expect. On the other hand, SSO1 and SSO3 consumers felt that their privacy was well protected by their organisation, and while SSO2 consumers agreed with this statement they did so at a level less than the consumers of the other two SSOs, suggesting there may have been some privacy issues experienced by SSO2 consumers in the past.

Table 5.13 Consumer Perceptions System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sys1: I trust the organisation will not misuse my personal information</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.88)</td>
<td>5.19 (2.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sys2: They are error free</td>
<td>5.52 (1.27)</td>
<td>5.43 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.29 (1.10)</td>
<td>5.69 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sys3: I feel like my privacy is protected using them</td>
<td>4.99 (1.44)</td>
<td>5.07 (0.97)</td>
<td>5.14 (1.15)</td>
<td>4.52 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.2.5. Fulfilment

Consumer fulfilment results indicate that SSOs rate them quite favourably overall, with means around 5, and support for the fulfilment associated with the helpfulness in gaining knowledge about the sport. SSO1 and SSO2 consumers indicate they enjoy using the IMC, however SSO3 scored only 4.22 for this, which while still positive, indicates a lower
level of satisfaction and enjoyment associated with the quality of the IMC services provided. These results are displayed in Table 5.14.

**Table 5.14 Consumer Perceptions Fulfilment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fulfilment</strong></td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.77)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ful1: I would rate using them favourably</td>
<td>5.02 (1.21)</td>
<td>5.04 (0.89)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ful2: They helped improve my knowledge of the sport</td>
<td>5.16 (1.24)</td>
<td>5.13 (1.34)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.09)</td>
<td>5.24 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ful3: I enjoy the time I spend using them</td>
<td>4.97 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.18)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.22 (1.33)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.3. Experiential Benefit

Experiential benefit refers to the fulfilment of hedonistic needs or wants of the consumer. In contrast to functional benefits, experiential benefits are not concerned with the pragmatic outcomes of IMC use, and are focused on the experiences of the consumers through using the IMC services provided. Concepts including enjoyment, satisfaction and fulfilment are investigated within this construct, and an example scale item statement from the online survey is; *I enjoy communicating with other members through them*.

Table 5.15, shows experiential benefits of the hedonistic outcomes of using an organisations IMC services, measured across five scale items. Moderate to high levels of response were recorded overall for SSO1 and SSO2. SSO3 scored somewhat lower across the items which referred to enjoying the interaction; that browsing enriches their lives, and they enjoyed communicating with others, all of which slipped below 4. This again may be due to the lack of resourcing available to SSO3 to establish their IMC, or it could be the types of
people who participate in that sport not being as social in their outlook. Equally, it could be
due to poor delivery and integration of interactive elements to that organisations IMC, which
could be quickly overcome with a better site development or messaging service. There is an
element of SSO3’s events and activities being managed and run through external agencies,
which might also account for the elimination of many of the conversational or interaction
functions of the IMC delivered.

Table 5.15 Consumer Perceptions Experiential Benefit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential Benefit</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ExBen1: The social aspects provided are important to me</td>
<td>4.65 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.76 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.89 (1.07)</td>
<td>4.43 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExBen2: I enjoy the conversational interactions available</td>
<td>5.03 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.67)</td>
<td>5.35 (0.95)</td>
<td>3.98 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExBen3: Browsing and/or participating in them enriches my life</td>
<td>4.87 (1.31)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.21 (1.17)</td>
<td>3.92 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExBen4: I enjoy communicating with other members through them</td>
<td>4.84 (1.04)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.19)</td>
<td>3.95 (1.33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ExBen5: Through them I get to know people who are involved in the sport</td>
<td>4.75 (1.60)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.28 (1.23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.4. Satisfaction

Satisfaction reflects consumers’ subjective perception of, and evaluation of, service
performance, and therefore the performance of the sport organisations ability to deliver
functional and experiential benefits through its IMC strategies and tools (Kim, Trail & Ko,
2011; Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010). Levels of satisfaction are displayed in
Table 5.16, with all scores averaging around 5. These consistent responses indicate that the
IMC delivered by the SSOs meets the consumer expectations.
### Table 5.16 Consumer Perceptions Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satis1: I think I did the right thing in using them</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.96 (2.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satis2: Based on my experience with them, I feel very satisfied</td>
<td>4.81 (0.98)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satis3: I am satisfied with my decision to use them</td>
<td>4.91 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.06)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.6.5. Relationship Quality

Relationship quality as described by Kim, Trail and Ko (2011) is a “meta-construct composed of several distinct but related facets such as trust, commitment, identification, intimacy, and reciprocity” (p. 577). Relationship quality measures the strength and depth of relationships between consumers and organisations (Fournier, 1998; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006), providing a foundation on which marketing relationship principles can be based (Gronroos, 1982; Mahoney, Madrigal & Howard, 2000). The survey results, and observations from these results are presented for each of the five relationship quality facets identified.

### 5.6.5.1. Reciprocity

Reciprocity overall scored quite low overall when compared to the other constructs. While there were some other lower scores which appeared previously, these tended to be aligned to just one facet or one SSO. All scores associated with reciprocity featured below 4.54 as displayed in Table 5.17. This suggests that consumers generally believe that their organisations do not really notice when the consumers are providing benefit, and do not necessarily return, or acknowledge favours provided by consumers through IMC activities.
Table 5.17 Consumer Perceptions Reciprocity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reciprocity</strong></td>
<td>4.18 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.22 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.15 (1.84)</td>
<td>4.14 (1.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recip1: The organisation constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them</td>
<td>4.07 (0.85)</td>
<td>4.13 (0.91)</td>
<td>4.02 (0.61)</td>
<td>4.04 (0.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recip2: The organisation would notice if I did something that would benefit them</td>
<td>4.04 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.12 (1.09)</td>
<td>4.07 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recip3: The organisation pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them</td>
<td>4.43 (0.96)</td>
<td>4.54 (1.01)</td>
<td>4.31 (0.88)</td>
<td>4.31 (0.85)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.5.2. Trust

There is a reasonable level of trust identified by consumers with respect to their SSOs, as displayed in Table 5.18. Of interest was consumers of SSO1 indicated that while they felt that the organisation has integrity (5.20), they were a little less responsive in feeling that they could count on the organisation (4.67). Consumers of SSO3 scored very high in believing their organisation has integrity (5.44), but believed less that the organisation was reliable (4.79). While all scores are still above the mean, suggesting that consumers trust their SSO, these scores suggest that there still needs to be work done in this area.
### Table 5.18 Consumer Perceptions Trust

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust1: I trust the organisation completely</td>
<td>5.39 (1.19)</td>
<td>5.20 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.44 (1.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust2: I can count on the organisation</td>
<td>5.11 (1.25)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.06)</td>
<td>5.35 (0.92)</td>
<td>5.10 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust3: The organisation is reliable</td>
<td>4.88 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.67 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.21)</td>
<td>5.00 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust4: The organisation has integrity</td>
<td>4.81 (1.61)</td>
<td>4.99 (0.97)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.79 (1.35)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale item Trust5 which identified “The team really takes care of my needs as a member” was removed from the investigation at the pilot study stage (Appendix A) as it did not define the construct investigated.

### 5.6.5.3. Loyalty

Responses with respect to loyalty were relatively high across all consumers, and are displayed in Table 5.19. SSO3 responses were generally lower than those of SSO1 and SSO2, but scored higher in terms of the consumers acknowledging that the organisation makes an effort to improve relationships. Consumers scored the item of always choosing the SSO website in preference to others above the mean, but a little lower than other items, suggesting that they may sometimes seek information from other sources. Overall, consumers display high perceptions of the SSOs capacity to ensure their IMC services try to increase customer loyalty, leading to consumers favouring their offerings above other competing organisations.

### Table 5.19 Consumer Perceptions Loyalty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loyalty</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loy1: The organisation’s website and IMC tools make various efforts to improve relationships with members and participants</td>
<td>4.96 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.71)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loy2: I always continue to favour the offerings of the organisation’s website and IMC tools before others</td>
<td>4.91 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.03)</td>
<td>5.34 (0.93)</td>
<td>4.71 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loy3: The organisation’s website and IMC activities make an effort to increase customer loyalty</td>
<td>4.93 (1.24)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loy4: I always choose to use the organisation’s website and IMC tools in preference to others</td>
<td>4.81 (1.15)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.06)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.20)</td>
<td>4.79 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.6.5.4. Intimacy

Medium to moderate levels of consumer perception ratings were identified for the intimacy construct and are displayed in Table 5.20. Consumers for SSO2 generally scored higher across the range of items, indicating they felt they knew more about their sport and SSO than was the case for consumers of SSO1 and SSO3. While, again, all scores were above the midpoint, consumers of SSO3 did not seem to be as familiar with their organisation. This result suggests that the information being provided by SSO3 to its consumers is not sufficient for their requirements. This may be an opportunity for SSO3 to address this aspect in an attempt to improve the quality of information being provided.

**Table 5.20 Consumer Perceptions Intimacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intimacy</th>
<th>Overall Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intim1: I know a lot about the services provided by the organisation</td>
<td>4.62 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.76 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.20)</td>
<td>4.16 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intim2: I feel as though I really understand the organisation</td>
<td>5.11 (1.04)</td>
<td>5.01 (0.97)</td>
<td>5.41 (0.89)</td>
<td>4.44 (1.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intim3: I am very familiar with the organisation</td>
<td>4.82 (1.51)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.28)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.29 (1.35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intim4: I know a lot about the organisation</td>
<td>4.33 (1.12)</td>
<td>4.19 (1.18)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.08 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intim5: I know a lot about the sport</td>
<td>4.76 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.41)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.57 (1.68)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6.5.5. Commitment

Commitment to the organisation resulted in some interesting scores. While all scores were above the midpoint, as displayed in Table 5.21, consumers for SSO1 indicated lower dedication (4.12) and pride (4.44) in their organisation, but relatively high commitment (5.07). Consumers in SSO3 indicated they were committed (5.24) and proud (5.37) of their organisation, but a lot less devoted (4.40) or dedicated (3.98) to their organisation. SSOs score of 3.98 was the lowest score for any item and possibly is reflected by the lower time that consumers have been involved with this sport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.78 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.86 (2.43)</td>
<td>4.74 (2.63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit1: I am proud to be a member of the organisation</td>
<td>5.03 (1.07)</td>
<td>4.44 (1.28)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.15)</td>
<td>5.37 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit2: I am committed to the organisation</td>
<td>5.14 (1.24)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.35)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.24 (1.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit3: I am devoted to the organisation</td>
<td>4.84 (1.54)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.40 (1.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commit4: I am dedicated to the organisation</td>
<td>4.45 (1.30)</td>
<td>4.12 (1.22)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.48)</td>
<td>3.98 (1.24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.6. Behavioural Intentions

Behavioural intentions, and the functional outcomes resulting from these, are important performance dimensions of Australian SSOs (Bayle, 2002; Winand et al., 2010). High levels of relationship quality have been shown to lead to positive outcomes for organisations, with the behavioural intentions leading to these actions providing critical resources to Australian sporting organisations. In line with general and sporting literature.
(Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2014; Oliver, 1999; Parasuman et al., 2004), the behavioural intention construct is comprised of, and reflected by, items including revenue, perception, participation and awareness, and were measured using scale item statements including the following; I will seek out activities and programs provided. High levels of psychometric testing for these elements suggest a high possibility that consumers will engage in these intentions, and provide the organisations with positive outcomes.

5.6.6.1. Revenue

Consumers were quite consistent in their responses to the construct revenue, as displayed in Table 5.22. Intention to purchase was high for SSO1 and SSO3 and moderate for SSO2, likelihood to purchase averaged around 5 for all organisations, while willingness dipped a little from that mark, and in particular for SSO3 scoring only 4.35. While this score for SSO3 is still above the midpoint (still positive), it suggests that SSO3 may need to be aware of supporting consumers more, to ensure they remain willing to purchase services from them.

Table 5.22 Consumer Perceptions Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>5.01 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.22 (2.19)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev1: In the future I intend to purchase services / merchandise / membership fees from the organisation</td>
<td>5.32 (1.07)</td>
<td>5.51 (1.20)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.11)</td>
<td>5.40 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev2: I am likely to purchase services / merchandise / membership fees from the organisation</td>
<td>5.02 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.20 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.13)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev4: I am willing to purchase the services / products of the organisation</td>
<td>4.87 (1.15)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.96 (0.98)</td>
<td>4.35 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale item Rev3 was which stated “I am willing to try the product/service of this firm removed from the investigation at the pilot study stage (Appendix A) as it duplicated scale item Rev4.
5.6.6.2. Perception

Public perception of an organisation has a number of direct and indirect benefits and as such, is an important functional outcome and behavioural intention of consumers.

Consumer responses generally averaged around 5 for perception, as depicted in Table 5.23. Only consumers from SSO3 indicated word-of-mouth advertising (4.55) was less likely for them than for the other two SSOs.

Table 5.23 Consumer Perceptions Perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>4.98 (1.74)</td>
<td>5.11 (2.39)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.83 (2.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perc1: I try to spread the good word about them</td>
<td>4.92 (1.10)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perc2: I give them lots of positive word of mouth advertising</td>
<td>5.04 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.26 (0.91)</td>
<td>5.35 (0.92)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perc3: I have recommended them to lots of people</td>
<td>4.92 (1.20)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.19)</td>
<td>4.76 (1.17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perc4: I ‘talk them up’ to my friends</td>
<td>5.05 (1.16)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.21)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.6.3. Participation

As a not for profit sport, participation is crucial to the success of the organisation, in both remaining feasible, but also in providing high quality services and activities.

Participation can lead to revenue from membership fees, participation costs and also through public funding based on user numbers. These factors make consumer perceptions on the relationship between organisational IMC and the intention to participate important for organisational success.

Participation scores for consumers of SSOs were generally high, averaging just below the 5 mark as displayed in Table 5.24. Of some interest was that scores for future participation did drop lower for all SSOs and in particular for SSO3 at 4.69. The other lower
score recorded was for SSO3 in terms of activities and programs provided where consumers scored this item 4.68. This may suggest that consumers don’t seek out programs due to the lack of information provided, or the lack of interest in looking for activities beyond the ones they wish to be involved with in the sport.

Table 5.24 Consumer Perceptions Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>4.87 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.97 (2.98)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part1: I intend to try out activities and programs provided</td>
<td>4.96 (1.11)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.04)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.18)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part2: I will seek out activities and programs provided</td>
<td>4.88 (1.14)</td>
<td>5.13 (1.22)</td>
<td>5.33 (0.93)</td>
<td>4.68 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part3: I will attend and/or participate in the sport on the future</td>
<td>4.97 (1.07)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.10)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part4: I intend to attend and/or participate in</td>
<td>4.81 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part5: The likelihood that I will attend/participate in the sport in the future is high</td>
<td>4.73 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.11)</td>
<td>4.73 (1.06)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.08)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.6.4. Awareness

The awareness behavioural intention reflected a moderate to high rating of consumer response, as depicted in Table 5.25. Consumers indicated they would watch or listen to the sport, but their interest in tracking or supporting the sport through traditional media scored a little lower.
Table 5.25 Consumer Perceptions Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aware1: I will watch or listen to the sport through the media, both traditional and digital</td>
<td>5.05 (0.98)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.03)</td>
<td>4.94 (0.97)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware2: I will track the news of the sport through media, both traditional and digital</td>
<td>4.71 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.68 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware3: I will support the sport by watching or listening to games through the media, both traditional and digital</td>
<td>4.63 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.65 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.26)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.34)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.6.7. Summary

The consumer perceptions were identified and measured using the conceptual framework, constructs and scale items derived from existing literature. The results presented the consumer perceptions, and specifically across each SSO, to provide a summary of the consumer attitudes and perceptions to the IMC services delivered by the organisations. These results highlight areas in which the IMC messages from the SSOs are performing to a higher level (high Likert mean generally > 5 points), or areas where SSOs may need to re-evaluate and refine their IMC practices to ensure that some of their activities do not fall lower. Obtaining higher scores throughout indicated a higher level of consumer perception suggesting the satisfying of consumer needs and wants.

While there were some scores lower than 5, (and even one score of 3.98), the scores were all above the midpoint, suggesting a positive response from consumers to questions asked. SSO3 overall had consistently lower scores throughout than the other two SSOs, which may be due to the types of consumers who access the sport, or the fact that SSO3 was a fairly new sport and had less resourcing available to develop their online presence.
These demographic findings present a rich source of data for further investigation in within group and across group differences in the perception of IMC delivery based on user characteristics. This within and across group analysis was not undertaken here as it was deemed to be outside of the scope of developing a conceptual framework and addressing the research aims, however, it is noted that this data provides an opportunity for further research in the effects that user characteristics exerts on perceptions of IMC and the implications for theory and practice.

5.7. DEMOGRAPHIC AND USER TYPOGRAPHY PERCEPTION COMPARISON

5.7.1. Introduction

In addition to consumer differentiation by organisations, segregated user groups within organisations exist, and can display varying attitudes and intentions to IMC delivery. Four categories were investigated to determine whether there are differing perceptions regarding service quality and relationship quality of IMC or digital media delivery (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). These categories represent particular demographics such as gender, age, participation type and level, and internet usage. In addition to investigating the perceptions of the overall data set as outlined in the previous sections, these four categories were compared within the overall dataset and across the individual organisations to determine if any patterns exist, or whether there are similarities or differences towards IMC service perception within these demographic categories. A one-way ANOVA test was employed across the cases for each of the user groups, to identify statistically significant differences within the user groups and across organisations. Initial testing was undertaken to compare across demographics,
represented by gender and age. This is followed by testing against internet usage and participation.

### 5.7.2. Comparison of Scores - Demographics

Results presented in Table 5.26 indicate an across case comparison of differences of consumer perception based on the gender of consumers. ANOVA testing identified statistical differences between the mean values for perception between males and females in the interaction and fulfilment sub-dimensions of the functional benefit construct, the satisfaction construct, and the perception sub-dimension of the behavioural intentions construct. This is supported by previous work where studies (Chumpitaz & Paparoidamis, 2004; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), suggest a difference in preferences in online sport consumption patterns, attitudes and intentions based on the gender of the user.

**Table 5.26 IMC Perceptions by Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Male Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Female Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Benefit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>4.96 (1.79)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.18)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.81)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.32)</td>
<td>-2.87</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.96 (1.58)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.84 (0.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.03)</td>
<td>5.10 (1.16)</td>
<td>-3.23</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fulfilment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.02)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>4.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.67 (1.53)</td>
<td>4.61 (1.34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Benefit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>4.71 (2.27)</td>
<td>4.73 (1.78)</td>
<td>4.70 (1.96)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>4.90 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.35)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.18 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.16 (1.28)</td>
<td>4.19 (1.16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.94 (2.54)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.16)</td>
<td>4.93 (0.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>4.78 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.51)</td>
<td>4.76 (1.13)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>4.73 (2.11)</td>
<td>4.70 (1.07)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

200
Table 5.26 highlights an overall alignment in results for the perceptions of both male and female IMC users. Differences in service quality between the sexes exist for the interaction and fulfilment sub-dimensions of the functional benefit construct, the satisfaction construct, and the perception sub-dimension of the behavioural intentions construct. This suggests that while male and female consumers’ attitudes are quite similar towards IMC, females experienced lower satisfaction, interaction, fulfilment, and perception from their SSO. The SSOs may seek to determine what these differences might represent, in order to improve these elements of the IMC function to better match the expectations of female consumers. The membership breakdown of the SSOs is almost 50% females, all three sports are represented in the Olympics and support gender equality, and these results indicate that while the consumers are not negative in their views towards the sport, there is still work to be done. Improving these results for everyone, and particularly for female consumers, may enhance female participation, and assist in securing related public funding. Any elements of IMC delivery where a disparity of perceptions between the sexes exist, needs to be addressed through improved and refined strategies and activities.

Table 5.27 presents a comparison of a specific user types across the whole consumer sample. In this case, age is the variable and is represented by three age categories to provide a comparison. One-way ANOVA testing was again employed, and the following statistically significant variances within the user groups were identified; the function benefit construct displayed significant variance of perception across the user groups with information,
interaction, design, and fulfilment sub-dimensions also returning significant differences.

Satisfaction as a construct also presented a significant variance in perception across the user groups alongside relationship quality and behavioural intention constructs. Interestingly, the trust sub-dimension of relationship quality did not return a significant difference in perceptions, even though literature has suggested an increasing adoption of IMC and e-commerce tools across elderly users (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.27 IMC Perceptions Age of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at p<.05 level
The findings support a comparison across age groups, highlighting substantial differences in mean results of perception ratings for a number of the constructs measured. While the Experiential Benefit perceptions of age groups are comparable, a difference in consumer perception of the quality of IMC delivered is evident for many of the categories presented. These differences may suggest a lack of alignment to the IMC needs and wants of the different age segments, which is not unusual. Do the needs to the under 18 segment match those required by the over 36 age group or the 18-35 group? The 18-35 age segment returned the highest mean scores across the ratings, suggesting a tendency towards higher implementation and adoption rates of internet usage by this group, potentially leading to more sophisticated behaviours and attitudes towards IMC. IMC messages delivered by organisations may be partly responsible for these results, while staff members from the organisations involved who are responsible for IMC strategies and delivery, were themselves from this age bracket and messaging functions may be more suited for an audience of similar demographics (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). It could also be that this is the largest group represented within each SSO, and most targeted due to this being the case.

A taxonomy of sport internet users suggests different aims, usage patterns and adoption and implementation rates regarding IMC based on differing age groups of users. Elderly age groups have been shown to limit internet usage due to privacy and security concerns while also being late adopters of social networking platforms for conversational and interaction needs (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). While this demographic is bringing adoption and implementation practices in line with younger age groups, a gap regarding the expectations of consumers within the 18-35-year bracket and internet users aged over 50 are still identified (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000).
5.7.3. Internet Use

Specific sport internet use, as shown in Table 5.28, differentiates survey participants along duration of time spent on their chosen SSO’s IMC activities. High, medium and low internet user groups were identified, where high is over 1 hour per day, medium 0.6 to 1 hours, and low up to 0.5 hours per day. Groups reflecting this level of usage were chosen to provide a meaningful comparison and discussion of user patterns. Statistically significant results (measured through one-way ANOVA testing) were obtained showing high internet users returned higher mean scores for the Behavioural intention construct and each of the four sub dimensions comprising it; perception, awareness, participation, and revenue. This indicates that consumer perceptions of the quality of IMC delivered were higher for the high internet use participants in this study. This higher level of use, and perceptions of the IMC function, can lead to higher levels of engagement, leading to increased use of the SSOs IMC channels. This, in turn, can lead to increased behavioural intentions providing opportunities for positive functional outcomes.

*Table 5.28 IMC Perceptions Level of Internet Use of Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>High Internet use Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Medium Internet use Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Low Internet use Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefit</td>
<td>4.96 (1.79)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.81)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.44)</td>
<td>-2.27</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.65)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.19)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.50)</td>
<td>-5.06</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>4.96 (1.58)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.10)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.61)</td>
<td>-2.43</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.23)</td>
<td>4.94 (0.87)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.77)</td>
<td>-4.88</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>5.25 (1.54)</td>
<td>5.00 (1.64)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.99)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
<td>4.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.67 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.60 (2.01)</td>
<td>4.70 (2.04)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.62)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.59)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.66)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship quality and functional benefit construct mean scores were also above average for the high use group, with statistically significant differences identified for the items information, interaction and system (functional benefit) and loyalty, reciprocity, commitment and intimacy (relationship quality). Again, as stated, higher internet users participating in the investigation displayed, on average, enhanced perceptions of the quality of the IMC function provided for the relationship quality and functional benefit constructs. The literature (Fournier, 1998; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006) explains that high levels of relationship quality are an accurate predictor in consumers being more likely to display positive behaviour intentions. These positive behaviours were shown to increase the likelihood of consumers attending a team’s games, consuming a team’s media content, and purchasing licensed team merchandise (Kim, James & Kim, 2013), providing an increase in revenue (derived from membership fees), participation, awareness and enhanced public perception.

These results suggest that encouraging increased use of IMC tools through providing functional benefit elements with respect to information, interaction, and system quality, can provide an increase of relationship quality between consumers and the organisation. This can
potentially lead to the positive organisational benefits associated with the behavioural
intention construct (Fournier, 1998; Kim, James & Kim, 2013; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011;
Palmatier et al., 2006). With high internet use participants returning higher consumer
perception levels regarding the quality of the IMC function (through the measurement of
functional benefit and relationship quality), and higher levels of future behavioural intentions,
the increased use of organisational IMC channels can provide the opportunity for increased
positive organisational outcomes for the sport bodies.

In addition, these results are also quite encouraging due to the lack of a statistical
difference in perceptions of the satisfaction and experiential benefit construct identified
across the groups. As increased consumer engagement through increasing levels of consumer
satisfaction and hedonistic benefit elements have been suggested as an antecedent to positive
organisational outcomes (Bayle & Madella, 2002; Hollebeek, 2011; Winand et al., 2010), the
lack of statistical difference across the groups indicates that organisations are delivering a
relatively consistent IMC function. This consistency suggests that the IMC provided by SSOs
does not exclude any possible benefits arising through differences in perceived quality of the
service delivered.

5.7.4. Participation Level

Results for perceptions when separated into participation levels of kid/junior,
social/recreational, and elite/professional, display some interesting comparisons, and are
presented in Table 5.29. Significant results from the ANOVA testing for the functional
benefit construct, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions construct
illustrate a difference in consumer perception of the quality of the IMC function, and
likelihood of positive consumer behaviour occurring across the range of user groups
measured. As such, the IMC service is eliciting differing responses from the age groups
towards the communications they are providing, potentially leading to differing behaviours towards the sport body.

The testing identified a range of differences of perceptions across the user groups for functional benefits including information, design, system and fulfilment, while the experiential benefit construct did not display a significant difference in perceptions across the user groups. Satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions all illustrated significant variances of consumer perceptions, suggesting inefficient tailoring of IMC messages for the user groups, or different acceptance, adoption and implementation of IMC within these groups.

Table 5.29 IMC Perceptions Participation Level of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Junior Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Social/Rec Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Elite/Pro Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Senior Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Benefit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.88)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.63)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.76)</td>
<td>-2.89</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>4.96 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.37)</td>
<td>4.97 (1.65)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.13)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.43)</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.67 (0.96)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.88 (2.03)</td>
<td>-6.02</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.44)</td>
<td>5.12 (1.26)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.99)</td>
<td>5.19 (1.66)</td>
<td>-4.66</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.91)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.93 (2.08)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.88)</td>
<td>-4.19</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Benefit</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.55)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.47)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.97 (1.22)</td>
<td>-2.32</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>4.71 (2.27)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.87)</td>
<td>5.00 (1.82)</td>
<td>4.27 (2.04)</td>
<td>4.83 (2.09)</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>4.90 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.97 (1.13)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.67)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.63)</td>
<td>-3.11</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>4.18 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.23 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.90)</td>
<td>4.22 (1.01)</td>
<td>-4.05</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.94 (2.54)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.69)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.40)</td>
<td>4.71 (2.18)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.88)</td>
<td>-3.11</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.78 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.21)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.71)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.65)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>4.73 (2.11)</td>
<td>4.99 (1.41)</td>
<td>4.91 (0.89)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.02)</td>
<td>4.84 (2.03)</td>
<td>-5.63</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioural Intent</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>4.98 (1.74)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.77)</td>
<td>5.26 (2.01)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.70)</td>
<td>5.11 (1.85)</td>
<td>-2.83</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4.79 (2.09)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.99)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.28 (1.15)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.60)</td>
<td>-3.12</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>4.87 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.08)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.27)</td>
<td>4.19 (1.99)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.27)</td>
<td>-2.77</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>5.01 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.24 (0.91)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.01)</td>
<td>4.43 (1.31)</td>
<td>5.22 (1.15)</td>
<td>-4.73</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at p<.05 level
Significant differences in consumer perceptions were prevalent for all categories except interaction, experiential benefit and commitment. This outcome is not entirely unexpected as the different requirements for junior participants as opposed to social and senior users, and against elite participant groups would likely differ. The attitudes towards their participation, and ultimately the requirements for IMC from the SSO is clearly quite different across each of these groups. These results provide an insight to the differing perceptions of the user groups, enabling the sport organisations to consider further tailoring the IMC services provided to individual user groups, in order to maximise the potential functional outcomes and behavioural intentions of consumers. For example, the elite level of participants indicate less favourable mean scores towards relationship quality and behavioural intent, which suggests that their needs require less intimacy, and they may be more selfish in their participation requirements than other more social / recreational participants.

5.7.5. Participation Duration of Respondents

The final user type investigated for variances in IMC perceptions was the time that the respondents have been involved in the respective sports. Four categories, 1-3 years’ experience, 4-6 years’ experience, 7-9 years’ experience and above 9 years’ experience in their sport were compared to identify any differences in perceptions. Results are displayed in Table 5.30. Through implementation of an ANOVA test, each construct apart from experiential benefit displayed significant differences in perceptions across user groups and, in addition all sub dimensions of the functional benefit and behavioural intentions constructs returned significant variances in perceptions across the cases measured.
Table 5.30 IMC Perceptions Participation Length of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>1-3 years Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>4-6 years Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>7-9 years Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>Above 9 years Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Functional Benefit</strong></td>
<td>4.96 (1.79)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.70)</td>
<td>4.82 (1.61)</td>
<td>5.01 (1.69)</td>
<td>5.26 (1.61)</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>5.03 (1.46)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.14)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.39)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.47)</td>
<td>5.09 (1.87)</td>
<td>-3.11</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>4.96 (1.58)</td>
<td>4.61 (1.23)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.13)</td>
<td>5.18 (1.17)</td>
<td>5.14 (0.93)</td>
<td>-2.65</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.74)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.62)</td>
<td>4.83 (1.89)</td>
<td>-2.19</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>5.11 (2.56)</td>
<td>4.92 (2.09)</td>
<td>5.07 (2.18)</td>
<td>5.16 (1.29)</td>
<td>5.05 (1.56)</td>
<td>-4.51</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>4.88 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.61)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.67)</td>
<td>4.94 (1.77)</td>
<td>5.06 (1.97)</td>
<td>-4.72</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Benefit</strong></td>
<td>4.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.56 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.64 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.50 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.88 (1.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.61 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.89 (1.29)</td>
<td>5.14 (1.65)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.51)</td>
<td>-6.04</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Quality</strong></td>
<td>4.71 (2.27)</td>
<td>4.37 (1.68)</td>
<td>4.69 (2.06)</td>
<td>4.81 (1.96)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.42)</td>
<td>-5.09</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>4.90 (1.49)</td>
<td>4.92 (1.37)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.08)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>4.18 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.03 (1.65)</td>
<td>3.98 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.29 (1.45)</td>
<td>4.41 (1.64)</td>
<td>-2.70</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.94 (2.54)</td>
<td>4.41 (2.77)</td>
<td>4.86 (1.59)</td>
<td>5.06 (2.12)</td>
<td>5.01 (2.03)</td>
<td>-3.23</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>4.78 (1.39)</td>
<td>4.17 (1.17)</td>
<td>4.81 (0.91)</td>
<td>4.93 (0.85)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.45)</td>
<td>-4.18</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>4.73 (2.11)</td>
<td>4.32 (1.79)</td>
<td>4.61 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.72 (2.18)</td>
<td>-4.14</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioural Intent</strong></td>
<td>4.87 (2.02)</td>
<td>5.07 (2.12)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.66)</td>
<td>4.75 (1.61)</td>
<td>-3.62</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>4.98 (1.74)</td>
<td>5.14 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.66)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.40)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.49)</td>
<td>-3.01</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>4.79 (2.09)</td>
<td>4.91 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.78 (1.83)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.75)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.75)</td>
<td>-4.17</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>4.87 (1.42)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.59)</td>
<td>4.71 (0.94)</td>
<td>4.87 (1.42)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.83)</td>
<td>-5.11</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>5.01 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.90)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.21)</td>
<td>5.02 (1.99)</td>
<td>4.66 (1.77)</td>
<td>-4.03</td>
<td>*&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at p<.05 level

As suggested with the participation user group, IMC messages can be tailored to specifically target the length of participation user group allowing for a more effective and efficient use of IMC. With all categories except experiential benefit and loyalty returning a significant difference across the user groups, IMC messages can be tailored to maximise consumer perception of these elements to fully leverage the possible benefits provided.

It is apparent that sport participants with a longer time experience of the SSO, display mean scores for that trend that are higher throughout. These results are posited to be higher due to the increased participation time in the sport leading to increased exposure to the IMC delivered, and this has enabled the SSO to create more opportunities for the organisations and
consumers to enhance relationships. This suggests that greater integration of IMC based
strategies to increase behavioural intentions across all user groups would result in a higher
potential of achieving desired outcomes through refining IMC messages.

Participation type was also considered for further investigation, however with 98% of
respondents reporting a participation type of ‘athlete’, meaningful comparison across the
types was not possible due to small populations of other user groups.

5.8. SUMMARY

Research question two was addressed in this chapter through an investigation of
quantitative data measuring consumer perceptions of IMC delivered by the participating
organisations. The results highlight many important theoretical and practical findings.

Theoretically, it has been shown that the adaption and refinement of existing scale
items can be employed to investigate the Australian not for profit sporting landscape, to
obtain meaningful data in association with existing literature in the field. Currently this
research is the first stage of adaption of data obtained towards development of a conceptual
framework. Scale items were tested and measured, thereby enabling the next stage of the
investigation to occur. This next stage involved testing the constructs developed using CFA
methods to test reliability and validity, before including them in the conceptual framework
and investigation. This process is presented and discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, with
the results and implications discussed in detail.

Practically, the results for consumer perceptions highlights areas of IMC delivery that
organisations are executing well, and areas where activities and strategies need to be
amended to bring these in line with best practice. With the direct relationships shown
between consumer perceptions of IMC activities and consumer behavioural intentions,
organisations can be assisted in achieving positive functional outcomes through the increase of levels of satisfaction experienced by consumers towards the IMC services delivered.

5.9. DISCUSSION OF ORGANISATION PERCEPTIONS AND CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF IMC DELIVERY

Chapter Five outlined the consumer perceptions of the IMC practices undertaken by the SSOs. Research Question 2 asked; *What are the consumer attitudes to IMC strategies adopted and implemented by Australian Tier 2 SSOs?* As such, an online survey with the three participating SSOs was undertaken. The findings from the surveys were compared to the findings from the qualitative interviews carried out with the appropriate staff members from the participating organisations. Through a comparison of organisational attitudes towards their delivery of IMC services, and the resultant consumer perceptions of these elements of IMC delivery, any variations in perceived quality of delivery and needs or wants of consumers can be identified, highlighting any gaps or disconnects that exist between the organisations and consumer expectations.

The literature review identified five constructs of importance in testing and measuring the consumer perceptions of IMC functions delivered by sport; functional benefits, experiential benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions. These constructs enabled a range of scale items derived from existing literature and refined through the pilot study process to be developed.

5.9.1 Consumer Perceptions Across SSOs and User Groups and Implications

Consumer perceptions across the five constructs of functional benefit, experiential benefit, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions are presented in Table 5.31. Table 5.31 highlights the differing levels of performance for each of these constructs.
identified through member and participant data, and provides a practical implication for organisations as best practice strategies and activities can easily be identified (highest consumer perception results). Identifying performance enables SSOs to ensure their IMC service is aligned to these practices. SSO1 has recorded the highest consumer perceptions for the quality of their IMC function for the functional benefit construct, satisfaction construct (equal with other SSOs), and behavioural intentions, while SSO2 performed the highest for the experiential benefit construct. Collaboration between the bodies can result in differences of strategies and activities within these elements being adapted and employed by lower performing SSOs to maximise the possible benefits arising from effective and efficient IMC implementation.

Table 5.31 Consumer Construct Perceptions Across SSOs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall SSO Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO1 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO2 Mean (S.D.)</th>
<th>SSO3 Mean (S.D.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefit</td>
<td>4.96 (1.79)</td>
<td>5.05 (2.47)</td>
<td>4.98 (1.67)</td>
<td>4.90 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
<td>4.63 (1.44)</td>
<td>4.91 (2.01)</td>
<td>5.04 (1.93)</td>
<td>4.11 (1.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.95 (1.56)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.29)</td>
<td>4.96 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.96 (2.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>4.71 (2.27)</td>
<td>4.69 (1.87)</td>
<td>4.83 (2.67)</td>
<td>4.55 (2.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intention</td>
<td>4.93 (2.02)</td>
<td>5.03 (1.76)</td>
<td>4.92 (2.98)</td>
<td>4.84 (1.70)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.10. COMPARISON OF ORGANISATION ATTITUDES AND CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS

The SSO interviewees and consumers each agreed about the importance of IMC, the benefits of IMC in driving behavioural intentions, and the areas of improvement required by SSOs with respect to the IMC services delivered to consumers. Interviews with staff from the SSOs identified common themes. These were identified in Chapter Four where the
organisational perspective or attitudes towards the IMC function was determined. Chapter Five introduced psychometric testing of consumer perceptions through an online survey, to identify the market perceptions of the quality of the IMC function delivered. A Likert scale of 1-7 was utilised, with 7 representing ‘strongly agreed with statement’ or ‘high’ in terms of perception of the corresponding element of the IMC message. As a result, many of the scale items tested, returned means in the region of 4 to 5.5, which while above the mid-point, reflects only a moderate to slightly above average agreement with the statements. As such, this only supports an average perception of the quality of the IMC function measured. This moderate perception suggests a potential gap or disconnect between the IMC function as provided by the SSOs and their consumers.

IMC delivery was posited as being very important, and even more important by the interview respondents. However, these interview respondents also noted that improvements were required due to a lack of quality of IMC delivery, resulting from a lack of critical capabilities including staff numbers and training. With the importance of IMC illustrated, and a disconnect between the IMC service provided by the SSOs and the needs and wants of consumers, justification is given to the development of a conceptual framework to assist in refining the IMC function of Australian SSOs to maximise the utility of the function.

5.11. CONCLUSION

The importance of IMC was outlined by both the SSOs and members and participants. The results of chapter five suggest that there are some gaps, or disconnect between the consumer requirements and activities delivered. Variances within user groups and across the organisations regarding perceptions of the IMC function, suggest the messages delivered by
Australian sporting bodies do not necessarily match up to the expectations of the market. This clearly indicates the requirement for further investigation to refine these messages.

Statements from participating organisations indicate that there is a need for improvement of IMC strategies and activities, and this falls into line with consumer perceptions of service and relationship quality of IMC delivery. Psychometric testing undertaken on consumers resulted in only a moderate level of satisfaction or identification with the service, represented often by a lack of capacity to fully meet these consumer requirements, thereby indicating the need for further investigation. This investigation will enable the development and/or provision of a framework for organisations to refine IMC strategies and activities in a practical sense, and theoretically, to provide a generalised model of the complete IMC function to allow further study in this context.

Chapters Four and Five studied the data obtained from staff members and members and participants of the SSOs. With Research Question 1 having addressed the attitudes and requirements of staff towards IMC, Research Question 2 addressed the consumer attitudes towards the IMC function delivered by the SSOs. The results established the need to operationalise the scale items and constructs involved to develop a conceptual framework to describe and measure the IMC process as employed by Australian SSOs.
CHAPTER 6: CONSTRUCT AND MEASUREMENT MODEL DEVELOPMENT AND TESTING

6.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Six outlines the development and testing of the measures, constructs and measurement models in order to address the research questions. The framework developed is derived from existing models developed in professional sport, not for profit sport and general marketing contexts (Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011; Boyle & Magnusson, 2007; Park & Kim, 2000). The framework consists of five concepts, with the relationships occurring between these employed to explore the end to end delivery of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in the Australian non-profit sporting landscape. The model was developed to investigate and measure the perceived quality of the marketing communications and digital message delivery, leading to organisational functional outcomes experienced by the organisations involved.

Measurement of consumer perception, service quality, relationship quality, consumer attitudes, and consumer intentions, were combined according to findings outlined in the literature review. A survey tool was disseminated online to members and participants of the three SSOs. The results of these surveys were then applied to a conceptual framework developed from current literature and refined through a pilot study process.

The constructs - Functional Benefit, Experiential Benefit, Satisfaction, Relationship Quality and Behavioural Intentions - were developed and operationalised from existing research and literature. These constructs and the items that emanate from them were refined for use through a multi-stage process. This process was based on Churchill’s suggested method (1979) and included refinement through an academic panel, then a pilot study using the perceptions and attitudes of Deakin University students to calibrate and eliminate some scale items and constructs (Appendix A). Finally, wording of scale items and constructs were
edited to reflect keywords and language used by the organisations involved without altering
the characteristics of the items and category properties. This development reflected
Churchill’s (1979) method, where a multi-stage process was undertaken where the constructs
are first defined and operationalised, then subsequently applied to the relevant context being
investigated, and finally refined using a range of tools including academic panels and pilot
studies.

As minimal construct purification was required, the next stage tested the validity and
reliability of the constructs, and then the measurement models comprising the scale items and
constructs they form were tested for goodness of fit through a CFA process. Scale items that
did not correspond to statistical requirements were deleted, and these refined measurement
models were then combined into a complete measurement model comprised of all of the
developed constructs. These results are presented and chapter seven undertakes modelling
techniques to develop and explore a conceptual model representing the IMC function of
Australian SSOs.

6.2. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY TESTING OF SCALE ITEMS, CONSTRUCTS
AND MEASUREMENT MODELS

6.2.1. Introduction

Testing of the multi-item constructs occurred through a number of statistical methods.
These methods are outlined with discussion on their appropriateness and the findings and
implications discussed. Item validity and reliability was tested along with univariate and
multivariate normality, coefficient alpha applied to ensure measurement reliability, and
exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis undertaken. The constructs were
tested for convergent validity and discriminant validity, and the underlying structure and relationships tested for goodness of fit to allow any measurement model respecification if required. Development of the path diagrams representing the conceptual framework followed. Models were tested with individual case data sets and the overall data set to ensure reliability and generalisability, before the complete data set from the three SSOs was used to develop the final conceptual framework.

6.2.2. Data Cleaning

Due to the number of scale items presented in the online surveys, alongside the large number of respondents, there was the need for extensive data cleaning. Incomplete responses were removed as the first step, and then remaining responses were examined for a range of issues including missing data, careless responses, duplicate responses, and responses which displayed high levels of univariate and multivariate variation of distribution through normality screening including identifying outliers through measuring skewness and kurtosis.

Missing data has been shown to negatively affect the reliability and validity of any statistical investigation and modelling carried out on the relevant data set (Hair & Anderson, 2009; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007). Responses with more than 5% of items missing have been shown to be problematic (Hair & Anderson, 2009), along with non-random missing data or responses which display a pattern to the items missing (Hair & Anderson, 2009; McDonald & Ho, 2002). While the use of online surveys has been shown to minimise the instances of missing data, there were a number of responses submitted which were eliminated following the guidelines provided by Hair and Anderson (2009). Removing these incomplete responses enhances the integrity of the data set and leads to a robust investigation of variables included. The number of responses removed were minimal and are tabled in Appendix E.
Careless responses are defined as responses which were completed in a noticeably shorter time than the average survey completion and/or displayed the use of one response category in a non-normal frequency (Hair & Anderson, 2009; Johnson & Owens, 2003; Meade & Craig, 2012). Responses which displayed the above characteristics were removed from the study alongside incomplete responses. Identifying and eliminating duplicate responses was the next stage in the data cleansing, and involved cross checking responses for multiple instances of names, and IP addresses to highlight accidental or deliberate multiple responses of surveys. A small number of responses were eliminated across all three organisations, and the summary of total sample size and responses deleted throughout each stage of the data cleaning process are presented in Appendix F.

Identifying and eliminating outliers in the data was the next step of the data cleaning process. Outliers are described as cases which significantly differ from the norm and have the potential to distort the normality of the data set being investigated (Hair & Anderson, 2009). This distortion can lead to problems using a number of statistical tools resulting in findings that may not be significant or generalisable (Hair & Anderson, 2009). Furthermore, given the conceptual framework proposed required structural equation modelling (SEM) be undertaken for its conceptualisation and specification, a data set consistent with SEM tools was required. Hair and Anderson (2009) and, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) explain that SEM assumes normal distribution of the data set used making the treatment of outliers, skewness and kurtosis critical in providing a data set capable of in-depth statistical investigation.

Outliers were identified using both multivariate and univariate methods leading to their removal once identified. Hair and Anderson (2009) define an outlier as being a case +/-4 standard deviations from the norm, while Kline (2015) uses +/-3 standard deviations from the mean as a cut-off point to determine whether a case is outside the norm and warranting exclusion. Kline’s (2015) more stringent definition of an outlier was employed throughout, to
improve the integrity of the data set, but also retaining meaningful variance between the
items and constructs measured. The outliers were identified using SPSS (version 23) with the
Mahalanobis distance statistic which measures a cases distance in standard deviation units
from the centroid of the means of the other cases included in the data set (Kline, 2015;
Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Cases which displayed a Mahalanobis distance greater than three
standard deviations away from the calculated mean were removed from the data set.
Univariate outliers were tested for next using SPSS version 23 to search each variable for
cases above the +/-4 standard deviation cut-off, with all identified responses removed from
further analysis.

Normality of the data set was then tested using skewness and kurtosis statistics.
Kurtosis is described as the flatness or extent of the peak of distribution when compared to a
normal distribution, and skewness tests the symmetry of a distribution when compared to a
normal distribution (Hair & Anderson, 2009). Acceptable measures for both skewness and
kurtosis have been suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) to be +/-1, representing a very
good range of distribution, while a value of +/-2 can be considered acceptable. The variables
treated and the descriptive statistics measured all fell within the acceptable range, but as some
variables were on the upper limits for both skewness and kurtosis, transformation of the data
was carried out. All variables displayed normal distribution after this treatment.

6.2.3. Reliability

Churchill (1979) and, Zikmund and Babin (2007) explain the importance of testing
the reliability of constructs measured, as only reliable constructs will provide error free and
consistent results, and also ensure that the measurements carried out are in fact focused on the
intended construct. Reliability is assessed by determining the systematic variation within a
measurement instrument, and provides a determination of the stability and consistency of the investigated construct (Cavava et al., 2001; Zikmund & Babin, 2007).

Cronbach’s Alpha, as suggested by Churchill (1979), is a commonly used and well-documented method to test the internal consistency of a model and ensure all items are correlated and are measuring the correct construct. Hair and Anderson (2009) suggest a value of above 0.70 must be achieved by a construct to be adequately consistent and appropriate for further study. However, Nunally and Bernstein (1994) expressed concerns with Cronbach Alpha’s ability to address the development of multi-factor constructs and its reliability in measuring this. As such, the Construct Reliability measures the squared multiple correlations of the observed variables and provides a measure of the internal consistency of a group of variables. Construct Reliability states that values for acceptable consistency are required to exceed 0.50, thereby offering greater acceptance than can be achieved through implementing the solitary variable measurement offered by Cronbach’s Alpha (Hair & Anderson, 2009). Where a number of measurement models are derived from latent constructs, the Construct Reliability method provides an extra tool to ensure the reliability of the testing carried out.

Using these two tools, results described as acceptable to very good were achieved for all of the scale items used to develop the higher order constructs investigated. These results are presented in Tables 6.5 – 6.9, where results for each construct and scale item are listed and discussed, both for the individual SSOs and the overall data set.

6.2.4. EFA Testing

Using an aggregate or overall presentation of the data, and for the three sporting organisations, the C.A and C.R values reported fell between 0.705 to 0.972, with the majority of constructs achieving scores of above 0.80. The results therefore display a high level of internal consistency.
Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed to ensure reliability of the statistical measurements. EFA uses statistical tools, usually in the early stages of an analysis or when insufficient information is available to identify relationships between constructs (Hair & Anderson, 2009; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). It is used to explore the variables proposed within a model and identify patterns between them revealing a common factor (Hair & Anderson, 2009; Malhotra et al., 2012), and the relationship between individual items and these factors. It is an inductive tool, where conclusions are drawn out of the data (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), in contrast to a deductive approach which utilises data to support existing conclusions. SPSS (version 23) was employed to carry out the EFA on the variables. As suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) and Costello and Osborne (2005), EFA measurement in a normally distributed data set tasked with providing the foundation for SEM requires the oblique rotation method (oblimin) to be used. This approach assists in identifying underlying factors, and the extraction of factors from the data, with the maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) method.

EFA testing provides two tools for determining and measuring the factorability of items tested. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) is concerned with the ratio of partial correlated coefficients to the observed correlations with desirable values above 0.7. Bartlett’s test of sphericity tests if samples are from populations with equal variances. Factorability tests of the measured items is commonly assumed. Bartlett’s test is used to prove this and when the values of this test are large and significant (Hair & Anderson, 2009), this assumption of equal variance is valid allowing factor analysis methods to be used. The complete results for the EFA testing of the items and factors are presented in Tables 6.5-6.9. These results support the case for the inclusion of the proposed constructs in further research, including the use in the conceptual framework developed.
6.2.5. Reliability of Functional Benefits Construct

Table 6.5 illustrates the scale item loadings and reliability measures for the functional benefit construct. This table highlights the reliability of both the scale items and construct as all of the measures tested exceed the cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) and Bollen (1989). With all KMO values measured above 0.80 and both C.A. and C.R. values exceeding 0.70 as recommended, the internal reliability of both the scale items and the latent construct developed has been shown.
Table 6.1 Reliability Testing Results for Functional Benefits

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<tr>
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<th>Item</th>
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<th>Tests All SSOs</th>
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<th>Tests SSO1</th>
<th>Loadings SSO2</th>
<th>Tests SSO2</th>
<th>Loadings SSO3</th>
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<td>.758</td>
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KMO = 0.811 Bartlett = 363.67 Sig = .001
KMO = 0.863 Bartlett = 910.61 Sig = .000
KMO = 0.829 Bartlett = 849.29 Sig = .000
KMO = 0.855 Bartlett = 677.64 Sig = .000
6.2.6. Reliability of Experiential Benefits Construct

Reliability of the experiential benefits constructs and scale items employed to develop it are presented in Table 6.6. Again, the reliability of both the scale items and construct is demonstrated, given that the measures tested exceed the cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) and Bollen (1989). With all KMO, C.A and C.R values exceeding the recommended cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) for these measures, the internal reliability of both the scale items and the latent construct developed has been shown.

6.2.7. Reliability of Satisfaction Construct

The satisfaction construct developed from three scale items has been shown to have internal reliability as it exceeds the cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) and Bollen (1989). With all KMO values measured above 0.717, and both C.A and C.R values exceeding the minimum cut-off of 0.700 as recommended, the internal reliability of both the scale items and the latent construct has been shown. These results are presented in Table 6.7.
Table 6.2 Reliability Testing Results for Experiential Benefits

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<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
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<th>Tests All SSOs</th>
<th>Loadings SSO1</th>
<th>Tests SSO1</th>
<th>Loadings SSO2</th>
<th>Tests SSO2</th>
<th>Loadings SSO3</th>
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Table 6.3 Reliability Testing Results for Satisfaction

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<th>Tests All SSOs</th>
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<th>Tests SSO2</th>
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<td>.760</td>
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<td>.692</td>
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</table>
6.2.8. Reliability of Relationship Quality Construct

The relationship quality construct derived from the five sub-dimensions; reciprocity, loyalty, commitment, trust and intimacy, also displayed internal reliability. Table 6.8 illustrates the results achieved from these tests and KMO, C.A, and C.R values exceeded the cut-off of 0.700, supporting the internal reliability of both the scale items and the latent construct developed.

6.2.9. Reliability of Behavioural Intentions Construct

Table 6.9 illustrates the scale item loadings and reliability measures of the final latent construct reviewed. The behavioural intention consists of four sub-dimensions and fifteen scale items, and reliability of both the scale items and construct is proven. All of the measures tested exceed the cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009) and Bollen (1989), with all KMO values measured above 0.800 and both C.A and C.R values exceeding 0.700 as recommended.
### Table 6.4 Reliability Testing Results for Relationship Quality

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<td>Commit1</td>
<td>.724 C.A .913 C.R .930</td>
<td>.877 C.A .965 C.R .965</td>
<td>.653 C.A .847 C.R .864</td>
<td>.814 C.A .927 C.R .945</td>
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<td>.918</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commit3</td>
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<td>.975</td>
<td>.922</td>
<td>.950</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commit4</td>
<td>.918</td>
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<td>.820</td>
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</table>
Table 6.5 Reliability Testing Results for Functional Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Loadings All SSOs</th>
<th>Tests All SSOs</th>
<th>Loadings SSO1</th>
<th>Tests SSO1</th>
<th>Loadings SSO2</th>
<th>Tests SSO2</th>
<th>Loadings SSO3</th>
<th>Tests SSO3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td></td>
<td>KMO = .818</td>
<td>Bartlett = 401.612</td>
<td>KMO = .813</td>
<td>Bartlett = 396.660</td>
<td>KMO = .880</td>
<td>Bartlett = 749.630</td>
<td>KMO = .845</td>
<td>Bartlett = 645.785</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig = &lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig = &lt;.003</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig = &lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sig = 0.000</td>
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<td>Revenue</td>
<td>Rev1</td>
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<td>C.A .726</td>
<td>.901</td>
<td>C.A .906</td>
<td>.751</td>
<td>C.A .750</td>
<td>.682</td>
<td>C.A .765</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>C.R .813</td>
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<td>C.R .972</td>
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<td>C.R .760</td>
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<td>C.R .754</td>
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<td>.758</td>
<td>.726</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Rev3</td>
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<td>.639</td>
<td>.725</td>
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<td>C.R .828</td>
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<td>C.R .889</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perc2</td>
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<td>.684</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perc3</td>
<td>.746</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Perc4</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td>.882</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.812</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<td>C.A .824</td>
<td>.794</td>
<td>C.A .880</td>
<td>.629</td>
<td>C.A .868</td>
<td>.667</td>
<td>C.A .826</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .879</td>
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<td>C.R .899</td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .871</td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Part2</td>
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<td>.743</td>
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<td>.811</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part3</td>
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<td>.761</td>
<td>.788</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part4</td>
<td>.800</td>
<td>.883</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part5</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>.873</td>
<td>.809</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Aware1</td>
<td>.743</td>
<td>C.A .718</td>
<td>.715</td>
<td>C.A .705</td>
<td>.787</td>
<td>C.A .720</td>
<td>.832</td>
<td>C.A .798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .792</td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .822</td>
<td></td>
<td>C.R .768</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aware3</td>
<td>.734</td>
<td></td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.802</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.10. Summary

Testing of the items displayed scores for KMO ranging between 0.734 to 0.968 which are in the range defined as meritorious to marvellous. Results for Bartlett’s test of sphericity also showed large and significant values supporting the existence of underlying factorability within the items. A number of scale items used in developing these constructs however, were eliminated due to poor factorability within the constructs. These items had a factor loading score of below 0.400 and, as suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009), were unsuitable for inclusion. Given the approach was to produce a generalisable conceptual framework, where a loading score below 0.400 was recorded for any construct, the construct was eliminated from all of the SSOs’ models.

6.3. CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AND MEASUREMENT MODEL TESTING

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), in contrast to the exploratory nature of investigations carried out by EFA, is employed to test and prove hypothesised relations between observed variables, or to confirm theoretical frameworks derived from previous research and review of existing literature (Byrne, 2001; Hair & Anderson, 2009). Measurement models form the basis of a CFA investigation, where multiple latent variables are tested to determine if they are discriminant from each other, but also possess a relationship between them and the observed values included in the framework (Byrne, 2001; Hair & Anderson, 2009). The measurement models tested the consumer perception of an organisations IMC. Measures were undertaken of the experiential and functional benefit of the IMC services delivered, the mediating effects, experiential and functional benefit of the IMC services delivered, and the positive, direct effects of consumer satisfaction on these
perceptions defined as service quality. These measures enabled the behavioural attitudes
derived from the IMC activities defined as relationship quality, and finally the organisational
outcomes resulting from these attitudes, measured as behavioural intentions, to be
determined. These measurement models were derived from the literature review and
individual items were included or removed from the models according to the results from the
EFA investigation. AMOS (version 22.0) was used for the construction and testing of the
measurement models, and the testing undertaken aimed to prove the suitability of the
proposed model, using statistical tools to determine model fit.

A number of criteria are available to the researcher to apply to proposed models in
order to determine suitability. These goodness of fit indices (GFI) are defined by Kenny and
McCoach (2003) as being used to quantify the degree of relationship, correspondence, and
variance between a hypothesised latent variable model, and the research data collected. As a
number of GFI tools are available to use, the researcher must determine which are the most
appropriate. Byrne (2001) highlights the task of choosing the correct fit indices rests solely
and squarely on the shoulders of the researcher. The GFI criterion to be considered for use
fall into three categories - absolute fit measures, incremental fit measures, and model
parsimony indices. Absolute fit measures, as defined by Hair and Anderson (2009), test how
well the proposed model fits the observed data used. Incremental fit indices, measure the
variance between the proposed model and a null model (observed variables uncorrelated).
The model parsimony indices were employed, to test an over-specified model with a
restrictive model, to determine whether a suitable number of coefficients were used in the
model to provide an appropriate goodness of fit. Following well used and documented
suggestions, a mix of the above three categories of fit measurement were utilised (Hair &
Anderson, 2009; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Taylor, 1990). The absolute fit measures employed are
the chi-squared statistic ($\chi^2$), the normed Chi-square test (CMIN/df), root mean square of
approximation (RMSEA), goodness of fit (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI).

Incremental fit indices employed were the normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). Finally, model parsimony was tested using both the parsimonious fit index (Pclose) and Hoetler.

Hair & Anderson (2009) highlights the effect of sample size on GFI testing and the cut-off values for the goodness of fit criteria follows his recommendations for sample sizes over 250 respondents and over 20 variables. These cut-off points are summarised in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Goodness of Fit Measure Statistics for Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goodness of fit test</th>
<th>Acceptable Level</th>
<th>Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Absolute Fit Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$ statistic</td>
<td>Low value (relative to degrees of freedom) with significance level</td>
<td>$&gt;.05$ significance reflects acceptable fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\text{Cmin/df}$</td>
<td>Ratios of 2:1 or 3:1</td>
<td>Values &lt;2 reflect good model fit, values &lt;3 reflects acceptable model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodness of fit (GFI)</td>
<td>0.90 or greater</td>
<td>Value $&gt;.90$ reflects a good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI)</td>
<td>0.90 or greater</td>
<td>Value $&gt;.90$ reflects a good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root mean square effort of approximations (RMSEA)</td>
<td>$&lt;.08$</td>
<td>Value $&lt;.05$ reflects a good model fit, value $&lt;.08$ reflects acceptable model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incremental Fit Measures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normed Fit Index (NFI)</td>
<td>Value close to 1</td>
<td>Value $&gt;.90$ reflects a good model fit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Fit Index (CFI)</td>
<td>Value close to 1</td>
<td>Value $&gt;.90$ reflects a good model fit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Hair & Anderson (2009)

Before the measurement model can be conceptualised, the direction of causality needs to be determined (Bagozzi, 1981). Direction of causality determines whether the relationship between the observed scale items and the latent construct variable is reflexive or formative. The differences in a reflective or principal component model, and a formative or composite
latent variable model are illustrated in Figure 6.1. Figure 6.1 shows the differences in the two models indicating that the direction of causality is from the construct to the measure for reflexive relationships, and causality reverses in the formative model and travels from the measure to the construct. Reflexive measures are expected to be correlated and possess internal reliability, while measures in the formative model do not have these expectations. Measurement error is accounted for at the scale item level in the reflexive model, while in the formative model, error measurement takes place at the construct level (Bagozzi, 1981).

![Diagram of Reflexive Relationship Model and Formative Relationship Model](image)

*Figure 6.1 Comparison of Direction of Causality- Reflexive Versus Formative. Adapted from Bagozzi (1981).*

The measurement models proposed, display a reflexive relationship between the scale items and the latent construct variable. From Figure 6.1, the measurement models; a) have a clear direction of causality from the construct to the measure; b) measures are based on existing studies; c) have been shown to be correlated and; d) possess internal consistency. As such, it can be assumed that the conditions of Bagozzi (1981) are met here. Further, removing
a scale item or indicator from the model will not alter the meaning of the construct, and measurement errors are considered at the item level. Measurement model respecification was not required at this stage, as the constructs involved have been tested and proven in a number of similar research studies. In addition, deletion of scale items according to EFA and validity testing carried out previously, allowed fully specified measurement models to be developed. The measurement models and goodness of fit measures are examined in turn.

6.3.1. Functional Benefit Measurement Model

The functional benefit construct comprised the five sub dimensions; design; fulfilment; information; interaction and; system (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Hur, Ko & Claussen, 2011). These sub dimensions, and the scale items constructing them, have previously been tested for reliability and validity returning direct positive results (Kim & Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Kim, James & Kim (2013)), and through the EFA testing their inclusion in the measurement model was supported. With this established, CFA testing was undertaken using AMOS 22.0 to examine the measurement model for the construct. This measurement model is presented in Figure 6.2 for the overall data set, while Table 6.7 provides results for the whole sample. CFA results show a very good model fit for both the overall data set and for the individual organisations, with all cut off points for goodness of fit measures exceeded.
Figure 6.2 Measurement Model, Functional Benefits

Table 6.7 Goodness of fit measures, functional benefits
6.3.2. Experiential Benefit Measurement Model

Scale items comprising the experiential benefit function are based on prior research in a sport consumer context (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). The five items co-opted for use were tested for validity and reliability with values for this testing exceeding the suggested cut-off points, showing their suitability for inclusion in the measurement model, displayed in Figure 6.3.

![Ex Ben](image)

*Figure 6.3 Measurement Model, Experiential Benefits*

The measurement model was developed in AMOS 22.0, showing strong loading levels across the scale items. Goodness of fit measures also illustrate a strong model fit for the overall data set and also those of the individual organisations tested, as displayed in Table 6.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Benefit</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole data set</td>
<td>188.236</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.041</td>
<td>.948</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.965</td>
<td>.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>205.564</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>2.234</td>
<td>.923</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>208.417</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>2.265</td>
<td>.908</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>247.188</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>2.687</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.991</td>
<td>.988</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.8 Goodness of Fit Measures, Experiential Benefit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.943</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.975</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.975</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>.966</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>.976</td>
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<td>2.21</td>
<td>.969</td>
<td>.976</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.971</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3. Satisfaction Measurement Model

The satisfaction construct was comprised of three scale items which allows CFA reliability statistics to be measured due to the presence of 1 degree of freedom. The goodness of fit measures presented in Table 6.9, and the reliability and validity of the items and construct being successfully tested by EFA measures, allow the measurement model as depicted in Figure 6.4 to be determined. In addition, satisfaction is deemed to provide a strong positive direct effect on relationship quality, and as a result influence the effects of relationship quality on behavioural intentions, further justifying its inclusion in the conceptual framework.
6.3.4. Relationship Quality Measurement Model

Internal reliability testing for the scale items and sub dimensions comprising the relationship quality construct (Kim, James & Kim, 2013; Kim, Trail, Woo & Zhang, 2011), displayed Cronbach’s Alpha and construct reliability (C.R) results exceeding the suggested minimum of 0.6 (Hair & Anderson, 2009). Factor loadings and sub-dimension covariance fell within suggested recommendations, resulting in a suggested good model fit for this 

![Figure 6.4 Measurement Model, Satisfaction](image)
measurement model across all goodness of fit indices, displayed in Table 6.10. As such, the relationship quality construct employed is presented in Figure 6.5.

Table 6.10 Goodness of Fit Measures, Relationship Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>X²</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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<td>.978</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>246.32</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>1.539</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.050</td>
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<td>.925</td>
<td>.973</td>
<td>.037</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>197.45</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.234</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>.982</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.966</td>
<td>.975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6.5 Measurement Model, Relationship Quality
6.4.5. Behavioural Intentions Measurement Model

The final construct proposed for use in the conceptual framework is the behavioural intentions construct. This construct measures the predicted actions of consumers in relation to the other constructs involved in the framework including relationship quality, satisfaction, and functional and experiential benefits. Again, as presented for the previous constructs, the sub dimensions and scale items comprising this construct were tested for internal reliability with measures exceeding recommended levels. The four sub dimensions and scale items are presented in the context of the conceptual framework in Figure 6.6, and the CFA testing for goodness of fit measures are presented in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11 Goodness of Fit Measures, Behavioural Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>84</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>2.686</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>.026</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>.994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>201.218</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>2.395</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>198.453</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>2.362</td>
<td>.946</td>
<td>.984</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>221.545</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>2.637</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.997</td>
<td>.998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The resulting measures from both the EFA and CFA were combined to investigate which items and constructs should be included in the conceptual framework, and to identify those which require deletion. The EFA uncovered items with loadings below recommended accepted levels (below 0.5) and also items loading onto multiple factors (cross loading). These items were deleted from the study prior to the CFA being undertaken. The CFA also resulted in a number of scale items being deleted which did not achieve the minimum loading weight of 0.30 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) with the final list of items and constructs summarised in Table 6.12 and deleted scale item listed in Appendix F.
Figure 6.6 Measurement Model, Behavioural Intentions
Table 6.12 Final Construct and Item List Employed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Original Measure</th>
<th>Final Measure As Refined For Investigation Each Likert statement is prefixed with- Consider your SSO’s IMC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Benefit</strong></td>
<td>The social aspects of (#brand)’s Fb page are important to me</td>
<td>ExBen1 - The social aspects provided are important to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>On (#brand)’s FB page, I get to know other people who are interested in this brand</td>
<td>ExBen2 - Through them I get to know other people who are involved in my sport and the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy the conversational interactions on (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>ExBen3 - I enjoy the conversational interactions available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy communicating with other members on (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>ExBen4 - I enjoy communicating with other members through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Browsing and/or participating in (#brand)’s FB page enriches my life</td>
<td>ExBen5 - Browsing and/or participating in them enriches my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Quality</strong></td>
<td>-website is a very useful source of information</td>
<td>Inf1 - The information provided is useful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information provided by (#brand)’s FB page is valuable</td>
<td>Inf2 - The information provided is valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information contained on – website is rich in detail</td>
<td>Inf3 - The information provided is rich in detail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information contained on – website provides a wide range of information</td>
<td>Inf4 - The information provided covers a wide range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction Quality</strong></td>
<td>I can learn something valuable by interacting with other fans in - website</td>
<td>Int1 - I can learn something valuable by interacting with others through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can count on –web managers to be friendly</td>
<td>Int2 - I can count on the staff to be friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-web managers recognise and deal with my needs promptly</td>
<td>Int3 - The managers recognise and deal with my special needs promptly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design Quality</strong></td>
<td>It is easy to navigate around and find what I want at -website</td>
<td>Des1 - It is easy to navigate around and find what I need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The layout of the team’s website is attractive</td>
<td>Des2 - The layout and format of them is attractive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-website is visually appealing</td>
<td>Des3 - They are visually appealing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>System Quality</strong></td>
<td>-website is error-free</td>
<td>Sys1 - They are error free.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel like my privacy is protected at -website</td>
<td>Sys2 - I feel like my privacy is protected using them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I trust –website will not misuse my personal information</td>
<td>Sys3 - I trust the organisation will not misuse my personal information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fulfilment Quality</strong></td>
<td>I would evaluate the outcome of using –website favourably</td>
<td>Full1 - I would rate using them favourably.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my decision to use -website</td>
<td>(#brand) makes efforts to increase customer’s loyalty</td>
<td>The team A pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on all of my experience with –website, I feel very satisfied</td>
<td>(#brand) makes various efforts to improve its tie with customers</td>
<td>The team A constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I did the right thing when I decided to use -website</td>
<td>I always continue to favour the offering of –website before others</td>
<td>The team A would notice if I did something that benefitted the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is fun to visit -website</td>
<td>I always choose to use –website in preference to others</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-website helped improve my knowledge of the sport and the team</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>The team A pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ful2 - They helped improve my knowledge of the sport and the organisation.</td>
<td>Loy1 - The organisation's website and IMC activities make an effort to increase customer loyalty.</td>
<td>Rec1 - The organisation pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ful3 - It is fun to use them.</td>
<td>Loy2 - The organisation's website and IMC tools make various efforts to improve its ties with its customers.</td>
<td>Rec2 - The organisation constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about this team</td>
<td>Loy3 - I always continue to favour the offerings of the organisation's website and IMC tools before others.</td>
<td>Rec3 - The organisation would notice if I did something that benefited the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about the sport</td>
<td>Loy4 - I always choose to use the organisation's website and IMC tools in preference to others.</td>
<td>Tr4 - The organisation has integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about the products offered by the team</td>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>Int1 - I am very familiar with the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel as though I really understand this team</td>
<td>Int2 - I know a lot about the organisation.</td>
<td>Int3 - I feel as though I really understand the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am committed to the products offered by the team</td>
<td>Int4 - I know a lot about the sport.</td>
<td>I know a lot about the services provided by the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>I have recommended (#brand)’s FB page to lots of people</td>
<td>Perc1 - I have recommended them to lots of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I ‘talk up’ (#brand)’s FB page to my friends</td>
<td>Perc2 - I ‘talk them up’ to my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I try to spread the good word about (#brand)’s FB page</td>
<td>Perc3 - I try to spread the good word about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I give (#brand)’s FB page lots of positive word-of-mouth advertising</td>
<td>Perc4 - I give them lots of positive word of mouth advertising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>I will track the news on the (team name) through the media (e.g., TV, Internet, Radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Aware1 - I will track the news of the sport and the organisation through the media, both traditional and digital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will watch or listen to the (team name)’s game(s) through the media (e.g., TV, internet, radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Aware2 - I will read, watch and listen to stories related to the sport and the organisation in the media, both traditional and digital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will support the (team name) by watching and listening to (team name)’s games through the media (e.g., TV, internet, radio, etc.)</td>
<td>Aware3 - I will support the organisation by following stories about the sport and the organisation in the media, both digital and traditional.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>I will seek out the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Part1 - I will seek out activities and programs provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I intend to try out the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Part2 - I intend to try out activities and programs provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I intend to attend the (team name)’s game(s)</td>
<td>Part3 - I intend to attend and/or participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The likelihood that I will attend the (team name)’s game(s) in the future is high</td>
<td>Part4 - The likelihood that I will attend/participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation is high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will attend the (team name)’s game(s) in the future</td>
<td>Part5 - I will attend/participate in courses or activities/programs run by the organisation in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>I am willing to buy the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Rev1 - I am willing to purchase the services/products of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am likely to purchase (team name)’s licensed merchandise in the future</td>
<td>Rev2 - I am likely to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In the future, I intend to purchase licensed merchandise representing the (team name)</td>
<td>Rev3 - In the future, I intend to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees from the organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.4. VALIDITY

Validity is defined as the extent to which constructs are accurately measured by efforts to measure them (Peter, 1979), or the extent to which differences in measurement results obtained reflect actual variations within the items measured, and are not constant or random errors (Hair & Anderson, 2009; Zikmund & Babin, 2007). In essence, validity is a test of the accuracy of the measurements undertaken. Many types of validation testing and methods exist, but three types of validity testing are most often used. Content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are the most relevant and appropriate and, as such, were employed herein.

Content validity is concerned with the alignment of the investigated constructs definition with regards to the scale items employed to develop the given construct (Hair & Anderson, 2009). While this is subjectively determined by the researcher’s judgement, there are guidelines to assist in ensuring the scale items most logically represent the construct they are used to measure. Churchill and Iacobucci (2006) warn that while following this process can reduce the criticism of the constructs, it cannot be used to guarantee validity. The process suggested by Churchill and Iacobucci (2006), included an extensive literature review be used to accurately determine the definition, characteristics and applications of each construct. A large set of scale items should then be developed to conceptualise these constructs, then testing through panels and pilot studies is used to refine the scale items to accurately represent the construct they are employed to measure. This research followed a similar process, where an extensive literature review lead to the discovery of the constructs needed, which, in turn, supported the development of the conceptual framework. These constructs were taken from existing studies, and therefore tested and measured scale items were already related to these constructs. Due to this, only minor refinement of these item was required. The subjective nature of content validity prevents a guarantee of accuracy, but the steps
undertaken here should minimise any objections and criticism of content validity of the constructs employed.

Convergent validity represents the extent to which items measured have a high level of variance in common within a specific construct, or the extent to which these items measure the underlying construct involved (Churchill & Iacobucci, 2006; Hair & Anderson, 2009). High correlations within items of a given construct is deemed to possess convergent validity, and as such, the items measured are actually measuring the construct intended (Hair & Anderson, 2009).

The final test for validity before deriving a conceptual framework, is testing the remaining scale items and the variable constructs for discriminant validity. Discriminant validity tests for covariance between factors within the complete sample, and in doing so, it can be determined that the constructs are distinct, and the items measured are only measuring the intended construct. Using a method proposed by Bagozzi et al. (1991), an unconstrained model is compared to a constrained version with restricted parameter values using a chi-squared difference test.

In a chi-squared test for discriminant validity, if the constrained model is statistically different than the unconstrained model (i.e., $p<0.05$), then the two variables are discriminant (Bagozzi et al., 1991). If the chi-square difference returns a non-significant value ($p\geq 0.05$), then the two models do not differ and the variables are not discriminant from each other (Bagozzi et al., 1991). This process was undertaken using AMOS (version 22.0) for each combination of constructs within and across the measurement models, with the results of this presented in Table 6.13.
Table 6.13 Discriminant Testing; Chi-Squared Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latent Var 1</th>
<th>Latent Var 2</th>
<th>^DF</th>
<th>^CMIN</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Func Ben</td>
<td>Exp Ben</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>68.097</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>98.254</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>66.233</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52.583</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp Ben</td>
<td>Satis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69.008</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24.676</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.215</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satis</td>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44.980</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>61.247</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ</td>
<td>BI</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62.312</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^df and ^cmin = in relation to constrained and unconstrained models

A p < 0.05 significant value has been recorded for these tests, suggesting difference between a constrained and unconstrained model. This suggests that these constructs are distinct and are measuring the scale items they are comprised of. These results show that discriminant validity was identified for each pair of latent variables, indicating intra-construct validity has been achieved.

The second method to determine discriminant validity examines the estimated correlations between the dimensions. This inter-construct test compares the squared correlation of latent variables to the AVEs for the corresponding variables. If the squared correlation is smaller than the AVE, then discriminant validity is achieved (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This test compares the AVE (average variance) of a construct with the squared correlation or variance shared between constructs. The test aims to establish that the sub-dimensions within the construct have a stronger relationship within themselves than they do with other constructs and sub-dimensions. If this is achieved by the AVE values being larger than the squared correlation values, then inter-construct discriminant validity has been shown. The AVE figures and Cronbach Alpha and construct reliability results are listed in Table 6.14.
Table 6.14 Validity Statistics for Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>C.A</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>AVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>.802</td>
<td>.864</td>
<td>.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>.867</td>
<td>.789</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td>.747</td>
<td>.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>.749</td>
<td>.793</td>
<td>.612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>.826</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>.818</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>.755</td>
<td>.780</td>
<td>.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.930</td>
<td>.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>.855</td>
<td>.863</td>
<td>.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>.743</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td>.726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.792</td>
<td>.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>.824</td>
<td>.829</td>
<td>.767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>.655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The discriminant validity test results for each of the individual constructs are illustrated in Tables 6.15-6.17. As presented, the AVE values (bold) are larger than the squared correlation values (normal text), highlighting that the sub-dimensions comprising the constructs used in the survey show inter-construct validity.

Table 6.15 Discriminant Validity Scale Items- Functional Benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information Quality</th>
<th>Interaction Quality</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>System</th>
<th>Fulfilment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Quality</td>
<td>.714</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction Quality</td>
<td>.218</td>
<td>.668</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.208</td>
<td>.612</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment</td>
<td>.230</td>
<td>.254</td>
<td>.524</td>
<td>.342</td>
<td>.793</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note; Bold values represent the average variance extracted by the construct, non-bold represents the variance shared between constructs.
Table 6.16 Discriminant Validity Scale Item- Relationship Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Loyalty</th>
<th>Reciprocity</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Intimacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
<td>.483</td>
<td>.618</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>.177</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>.312</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.698</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.265</td>
<td>.165</td>
<td>.614</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note; Bold values represent the average variance extracted by the construct, non-bold represents the variance shared between constructs.

Table 6.17 Discriminant Validity Scale Item- Behavioural Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Awareness</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>.726</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>.433</td>
<td>.621</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>.343</td>
<td>.476</td>
<td>.767</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>.154</td>
<td>.321</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>.655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note; Bold values represent the average variance extracted by the construct, non-bold represents the variance shared between constructs.

Through implementing these testing methods, it was confirmed that the scale items and constructs were distinct, therefore discriminant validity was shown for these items making them suitable for use in the conceptual framework.

6.5. FULL MEASUREMENT MODEL AND GOODNESS OF FIT MEASURES

With individual construct measurement models tested for goodness of fit and validity, the last process undertaken before the structural equation modelling process occurs, was to test the goodness of fit of the full measurement model. The full measurement model is illustrated in Figure 6.7. In this case co-variances were not shown in order to reduce clutter, but the full results are presented in Appendix G. The goodness of fit measures are highlighted in Table 6.18, displaying a very good fit across the range of suggested goodness of fit indices.
Figure 6.7 Full Measurement Model
Table 6.18 Goodness of fit measures, full measurement model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole data set</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.958</td>
<td>.941</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.6. SUMMARY

Chapter Six introduced, defined and operationalised the identified constructs. This allowed reliability and validity testing to be carried out on the items and constructs to determine their suitability for inclusion in the statistical modelling. Statistical tests including EFA (for testing reliability of scale items and constructs), and CFA (for testing the validity of developed constructs and measurement models) were undertaken, with results assisting in further refining the constructs considered for inclusion in the conceptual framework. Validity and reliability was shown to exist for all of the constructs within the measurement models, and across the complete data. These results indicate that the refined constructs could be employed in conceptualising a framework designed to measure the strategic process of IMC delivery by non-profit sport organisations.

Using the literature review as a foundation for conceptualising the framework, a path diagram is presented in Chapter Seven. From here, analysis proceeded to structural equation modelling processes, and statistical methods, to test and measure the relationships between the constructs within the proposed conceptual model. Following this, hypotheses derived from the research questions were developed to fit the conceptual framework.
CHAPTER 7: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF MODEL SPECIFICATION AND HYPOTHESES TESTING

7.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Seven extends the construct development from Chapter Five and the measurement model testing from Chapter Six. To date, analysis has introduced a conceptual framework consisting of five multi-dimensional constructs derived from the extensive literature review. This included a respecification process to develop a model of best fit to represent the strategic process of IMC delivery in Australian non-profit sport organisations. In this chapter, the framework will undergo structural equation modelling (SEM) and other statistical testing to support or disprove hypotheses developed from the research questions.

7.2. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

Structural equation modelling (SEM) provides a tool enabling the researcher to measure overall tests of model fit, regression weights, correlation coefficients, means and variances simultaneously (Bryne, 2001). It expands on the ability of CFA testing in examining the relationships between measures and latent variables (items and constructs) and allows the examination of the relationships between the latent variables (Jarvis et al., 2003). This occurs alongside the capability to utilise multiple regression equations to estimate multiple and interrelated relationships and to measure unobserved variables and constructs within the framework (Bryne, 2001), by combining the factor analysis properties of the CFA with path analysis or regression analysis. In doing so, SEM provides a tool where the researcher can illustrate both the direction and strength of, relationships between latent variables and constructs (Jarvis, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003). AMOS 22.0 was employed to undertake SEM on the data.
Similar to CFA, SEM is used to test and measure hypothesised relationships and investigate the goodness of fit of the overall structure of the proposed model given the data used. SEM analysis measures these relationships and goodness of fit through examining independent and dependent variables simultaneously using a covariance structure analysis (Hair & Anderson, 2009). This allows the examination of direct and indirect effects of the independent variable on the dependent variables (Kline, 2015). Path coefficients are used to test and measure the direction and strength of these direct and indirect effects. A direct effect occurs when the independent variable has a direct impact on the dependent variable. When the impact between the independent variable and the dependent variable occurs through another variable (mediator), this impact or influence is defined as indirect. The measurements and process followed for the CFA testing is employed for the SEM analysis, with the same cut off points for suitability of chi-square, RMSEA, TLI, CFI, GFI and AGFI being applied.

Further development of the statistical analysis occurs through measuring r-squared or $r^2$. The $r^2$ statistic enables the researcher to measure the percentage of variance relevant dimensions are exerting on the measured variable. The $r^2$ variable is a useful measure as it allows the researcher, in addition to regression weight measures, to compare and contrast the effects that each of the organisations different IMC strategies and activities exert on the framework. As a result, the effects on relationship quality and consumer satisfaction that functional quality and experiential quality impose can be easily measured. Likewise, the influence that relationship quality and consumer satisfaction exert on behavioural intentions is readily recognised through the percentages of variance influenced as shown by the $r^2$ statistic. Finally, within this framework, the influence on variance of functional outcomes that behavioural intentions provides can be determined. As the proposed framework to build this research is based on a latent construct built from a number of independent, dependent and observed variables, SEM techniques provide a suitable and appropriate method to test and
measure both the suitability of the overall model given the data set, and to also test and measure the relationships identified through developing hypotheses.

### 7.3. INVARIANCE TESTING

Given that data was obtained from three SSOs, it was important to test the invariance of results achieved across the three organisations. Invariance testing is a method of measuring generalisability, through detecting invariance using a multi-group analysis. Detecting invariance across multiple groups or subjects supports generalisability, as invariance points to a lack of systematic bias being present across the data set and the measurement items employed (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998; Yoo et al., 2000).

Two types of invariance testing were employed. Measurement invariance, using metric invariance testing methods, was tasked with testing the factor loadings within the measurement models. Structural invariance testing, which focused on the relationships between the constructs and not the relationships between the items and constructs, was tested alongside measurement invariance testing (Byrne, 2010; Yoo et al., 2000).

Metric invariance, using CFA, assumes data used within the models are drawn from the same population (Byrne, 2001). Using this data, two versions of the path diagram are compared to determine the presence of systemic bias and, as a result, invariance (Byrne, 2010; Yoo et al., 2000). Version one of the measurement model has path values constrained, and this is compared to version two of the model where these corresponding values are unconstrained. Comparison of the two models allows determination of invariance through detecting similarities in the values of the factor loadings between the constrained and unconstrained, (i.e. if variable loadings are identical the data used to measure both models possesses a systemic bias and are therefore invariant). To detect these similarities, invariance
testing methods use the chi-squared difference test as suggested by a number of authors
(Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). An insignificant result indicates a
lack of difference between the models compared, and full invariance can be shown.
Alternatively, a significant result in the chi-squared difference test indicates differences were
detected between the model’s variable loadings, invariance was not achieved, and, as a result,
no systematic bias detected within the data.

The second test for invariance, structural (configurational) invariance, also assumes
the same dataset is used for the comparison of the two models examined, and also uses a
constrained and an unconstrained model for this comparison. In contrast to metric invariance
testing, where only the variance in factor loadings within the model is examined, structural
invariance testing examines both the factor loadings and the regression paths (Bagozzi & Yi,
2012; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1998). The chi-squared difference test is also undertaken
for structural invariance, and again, a significant result in this test denotes variance between
the constrained and unconstrained models, allowing use of the datasets due to no systematic
errors and bias being present. Cheung and Rensvold (2002) suggest invariance testing needs
to be undertaken and measured using more than one tool. In conjunction with the chi-squared
difference method outlined above, invariance has been tested by comparing the closeness of
fit (CFI) of the constrained and unconstrained variants of the model. Differences in these two
CFI results would indicate variance across the data and no systemic bias within, thereby
supporting the results of the chi-squared difference test in determining the invariance of the
data used.
7.4. TESTING OF CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND MODEL RESPECIFICATION

Based on the conceptual framework developed from the literature review, data collected through the pilot study was applied to this framework to obtain a preliminary indication of the suitability using goodness of fit measures presented in Table 6.10. The results of the goodness of fit measures for the pilot study are not included here, given that the data was not sport specific and purely designed to support development of the item structure. An overview of these findings is supplied in Appendix A. As such, both the literature review and preliminary goodness of fit testing, support the use of this initial conceptual framework. This framework was applied to the overall data set as the foundation for the SEM and multivariate testing undertaken.

After the testing of pilot study data, the preliminary framework was measured using the data collected for the participating state sporting organisations. This initial testing was undertaken prior to the deleting of scale items described in Chapter Five, to gain an insight into the similarities and differences displayed by the organisations through their application of different IMC strategies and activities.

These results are presented in Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 and illustrate the variance throughout the models representing the strategic IMC process of the participating organisations. These differences support both the need for this investigation given the variances in relationship strengths between the constructs, and also support the development of the items, constructs and models, as the variances displays both reliability and validity.

7.4.1. Initial Linear Framework

Figure 7.1 shows a linear representation of the five constructs and the scale items employed to measure them. Following a systems process framework, inputs in the form of consumer perceptions of Functional and Experiential Benefits are displayed. These inputs, in
turn, influence the Satisfaction construct, which leads to Relationship Quality, before finally causing Behavioural Intentions. Table 7.1 illustrates an acceptable goodness of fit for this initial model. However, from the initial model represented in Figure 7.1, a number of scale items were removed as individual data sets from the SSOs for these items displayed negative correlations with other items and constructs within the model, and also had a negative effect on the goodness of fit measures as shown in Table 7.1. The scale items removed were; SSO1, loyalty 5 correlation -.17, revenue 4 correlation -.04; SSO2, loyalty 6 correlation -.23, loyalty 6 correlation -.08; SSO3, loyalty 6 correlation -.02.
Figure 7.1 Initial Model Based on Existing Literature
Table 7.1 Goodness of Fit Measures Initial Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>974.46</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.913</td>
<td>.906</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.926</td>
<td>.934</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>899.25</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>.932</td>
<td>.927</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.936</td>
<td>.951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>866.55</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.918</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.933</td>
<td>.938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With these scale items deleted to provide a better goodness of fit for both the individual SSO models, a respecified conceptual framework was developed as presented in Figure 7.2. The goodness of fit measures for this framework were shown to be an improvement on the initial framework suggested and this is illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Goodness of Fit Measures Initial Model- Items Deleted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>759.05</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.949</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>830.11</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>.990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>826.88</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.957</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.937</td>
<td>.963</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.1 and Tables 7.1 and Table 7.2 illustrates that a linear representation of the strategic IMC process as developed from the literature review provides a valid and suitable conceptual framework. Fit measures improved significantly after deleting non-conforming scale items and in all cases, exceed the cut-offs for fit indices measured by CFA and SEM tools in this context and for this sample size (Hair & Anderson, 2009).

In comparing the results for the three SSOs applied to the original framework, the linear nature of the framework observed is consistent and transferable across the three data sets. Removing scale items that did not conform to CFA and SEM fit indices improved the goodness of fit measures for the framework across the three data sets while still representing the IMC function fully.
A model that can represent a number of data sets needs to be developed, which presents a generalisable framework for use across a range of sport or related organisations. The results should not be discounted however as they provide further support of the reliability and validity of the datasets, through a lack of systemic bias leading to different results. Subsequently, different frameworks across the SSOs, provide an illustration of measurement of each individual organisations IMC processes, and the effects of these actions on proposed relationships within the framework.

7.4.2. Final Linear Framework

In order to provide a generalisable model, respecification of the above framework was undertaken, with the resulting framework presented in Figure 7.2. This framework followed the linear process derived from the literature review, providing a suitable framework for use across all of the organisations. This parsimonious model increases the usability of the framework across intended trials, as it provides a model of best fit.

After suitability was shown with the pilot data, sport specific data obtained from the main study was tested on the framework. This data was initially drawn from case 1, or SSO1 and is presented in Figure 7.2 with goodness of fit results in Table 7.3.
Figure 7.2 Respecified Linear Model- SSO1Study Data
Table 7.3 Goodness of Fit Measures- Respecified Linear Model - SSO1 Main Study Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>759.05</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.954</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All effects significant at p < .05

The respecified model when employed to measure and test the data from the individual data set from SSO1 meets criteria for reliability and validity. Furthermore, Table 7.3 offers good fit outcomes. Comparing the results of this to the suggested cut-off points supplied by Hair and Anderson (2009) presented in Table 6.10, all goodness of fit measures exceed the cut off points, suggesting a very good model fit. The goodness of fit indices have also shown improvement over the initial linear model pre-item deletion thus supporting the removal of the scale items.

Following successful results from the framework utilising the data set from SSO1, the respecified model was subsequently applied to the data gained from the remaining SSOs, to further test for reliability and validity prior to applying the complete data set to the framework. From this, all three data sets were shown to be reliable and valid from results of the initial linear model, and the respecified model is of good fit (Hair & Anderson, 2009). In addition, the variances illustrated between the three SSOs data and resulting models supports earlier findings of lack of invariance, and suggest that all data sets employed in the study are free of systemic bias and therefore appropriate for use.

The respecified model for the overall data set of the SSOs (all three SSO cases combined) is presented in Figure 7.3. Overall and group level analysis (for the three individual organisations) was used to assess goodness of fit measures. These are presented in Table 7.4 and all suggest a very good fit of model to the data employed.
Figure 7.3 Respecified Linear Model – Combined SSO Data (data sets of all 3 cases).
Table 7.4 Goodness of Fit Measures - Respecified Linear Model - SSO Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>811.54</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.965</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>759.05</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>830.11</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.972</td>
<td>.982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>826.88</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.952</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>.965</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All effects significant at p < .05

7.4.3. Final Framework

Although goodness of fit measures shown above are comparable, results presented in chapter five suggested a range of differences in the consumer perceptions of the IMC content delivered by the SSOs. These variances were pronounced at the latter stages of the conceptual framework including for the relationship quality, consumer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions constructs. Revisiting literature (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Kim & Trail, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), relevant areas of study concluded that the variable labelled ‘satisfaction’ may exert a direct effect on a number of constructs rather than solely the relationship quality construct illustrated in the linear representation of the conceptual framework. Although the descriptive statistics leading to this were not impacted by the conceptual framework, it was concluded that the linear representation of the framework was overly simplified. To address this, the complexity of influence exerted by the satisfaction construct, and the mediating and inhibiting effects on consumer satisfaction from external factors not measured in this investigation, needed to be included in the framework. The mediating and inhibiting effects on this model from unmeasured sources include demographic factors, family history of involvement in the sport, and other inhibiting elements and encouragement elements. These
elements have been proven to have a large effect on the participation in sport (Wilcox, Der Ananian, Abbott, Vrazel, Ramsey, Sharpe & Brady, 2006), and while they fall outside of the scope of this study they need to be identified.

Functional benefits and experiential benefits were shown not only have an effect on consumer satisfaction, but can exert a direct influence both on the relationship quality dimension and the behavioural intentions of consumers. Consumer satisfaction also was shown to have a direct effect on behavioural intentions and not only an indirect influence through the relationship quality dimension.

The final respecification of the proposed framework is illustrated in Figure 7.4. Comparing this final model to the linear representation preceding it, while the five constructs remain unchanged, the relationships between constructs illustrate a more complete representation of the IMC function. Figure 7.3 saw the Functional Benefit and Experiential Benefit constructs only exerting an influence on Satisfaction, whereas Figure 7.4 presents a more complete representation of the IMC function. This model shows a direct relationship between these constructs and relationship quality in addition to satisfaction. Satisfaction was also found to have a direct influence on behavioural intentions alongside relationship quality, in contrast to Figure 7.3 where satisfaction was only depicted to have an effect on relationship quality.
Figure 7.4 Final Respecified Model- SSO Data. Note: All effects significant at $p<.05$
Testing of this final model was undertaken successfully, with the data from all three SSOs in the overall dataset and also the individual SSOs showing results exceeding recommended goodness of fit measures and invariance testing results, as presented in Table 7.5. Enhanced goodness of fit measures for this final model respecification further support the literature findings of the appropriateness of these modifications. One anomaly was identified in the individual SSO models which was a small negative correlation between experiential benefit and behavioural outcomes for SSO3. This did not prevent the goodness of fit measures of the overall data set and SSO3 from presenting acceptable results for the goodness of fit tests. This is further discussed in the testing of hypotheses later in this Chapter.

In addition to the suitability of model fit, the respecified framework considering the additional direct effects of the Satisfaction construct on Relationship Quality was also evident, with the relationships between the constructs in the final model larger than the linear model illustrated earlier. The combination of these enhanced relationship results shown through increased correlation scores between constructs, discriminant validity, and the goodness of fit measures, show the final specified framework is suitable for use.

**Table 7.5 Goodness of Fit Measures- Final Respecified Model- SSO Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>X2</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>704.14</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.987</td>
<td>.989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>759.05</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>.977</td>
<td>.971</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.978</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>830.11</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>.967</td>
<td>.956</td>
<td>.039</td>
<td>.988</td>
<td>.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>826.88</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.024</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.968</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The discriminant validity test results for each of the individual constructs are illustrated in Table 7.6. As presented, the AVE values (bold) are larger than the squared correlation values (normal text), highlighting that the sub-dimensions comprising the constructs used in the survey show inter-construct validity.

### Table 7.6 Discriminant Validity Scale Items- Final Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Functional Benefits</th>
<th>Experiential Benefits</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Relationship Quality</th>
<th>Behavioural Intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefits</td>
<td><strong>.679</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefits</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td><strong>.581</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.103</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td><strong>.711</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>.216</td>
<td>.311</td>
<td>.411</td>
<td><strong>.709</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intentions</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.299</td>
<td>.381</td>
<td>.388</td>
<td><strong>.614</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note; Bold values represent the average variance extracted by the construct, non-bold represents the variance shared between constructs.

Construct correlations were measured (Table 7.7) to further support use of final model as a base for investigation of research questions. Table 7.7 indicates that correlations showed an improved model on initial version while supporting inclusion of constructs as suggested by Hair et al. (2009).

### Table 7.7 Construct Correlations- Final Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Functional Benefits</th>
<th>Experiential Benefits</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Relationship Quality</th>
<th>Behavioural Intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functional Benefits</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefits</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intentions</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of the complete dataset was applied to the respecified model, with results for the complete data set presented in Figure 7.4 to fully represent the Australian sporting system, and provide a generalisable framework in which to address the research aims.

Although the above framework provides an exceptional fit for the data provided and presents high positive values for the relationships between constructs used, little variance is observed within these relationships as represented by $r^2$ values ranging from 12% to 32%. While in line with comparable studies (Kim, Trail & Ko; 2011; Theodorakis et al., 2013), these low values, while presenting strong relationships between constructs, suggest that while IMC could be improved is it rational to invest more resources on an activity that results show is not that important when there is a lack of resources reported by the organisations.

Future investigations based on this framework should include this possibility with the inclusion of mediator and inhibitor constructs as discussed in the literature review. Investigation of these may indicate factors including family history, location of participation opportunities, cost of participation and personal motivations may impact the variance observed even with the focus of questions solely on the IMC messaging delivered. This introduces a practical implication of how SSOs should allocate scarce resources. For example, low variance observed suggests that while improvement of IMC services are needed, would the cost of implementing these changes provide comparative advantage compared to other business strategies.

As discussed previously these considerations fell outside of the scope of this investigation and provide an interesting and potentially valuable avenue for future study. This investigation is focussed on the overarching research aims of identifying disconnects between IMC delivered by SSOs and the consumer perceptions of this service and, best practice methods of this delivery. These aims were investigated through the development of a
conceptual framework and five research questions. Before these research questions were addressed, invariance testing of the final specified model and dataset was completed, as outlined previously.

7.4.5. Invariance Testing of Final Framework

Measurement invariance testing for the constructs and measurement models was undertaken and discussed in Chapter Six. As all p values fell below the 0.05 threshold, the measurement models used in the conceptual framework showed full invariance. This indicates the constructs developed for this study are suitable for inclusion.

Configurational invariance tests whether the participants of the surveys from each of the individual organisations define the scale items and constructs in the same or similar way (Riordan & Vandenburg, 1994). As such the dimensional structure of the measurement models must remain in the same configuration and exhibit the same results of salient and non-salient factor loading across the groups. The unconstrained overall data set model in this investigation produced good fit to the data with goodness of fit indices, $\chi^2= 704.14$, df= 323, $\chi^2$/df= 2.18, RMSEA= 0.018, CFI=0.989, NFI=0.987, TLI=0.974, with all values supporting configurational invariance of the final respecified model according to the suggestions of Vandenberg and Lance (2000).

Table 7.8 Metric Invariance-Chi Squared Difference Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>$^r^2$</th>
<th>$^df$</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Func Benefit</td>
<td>8.725</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel Qual</td>
<td>7.448</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>.114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behav Int</td>
<td>5.998</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: table shows changes between constrained and unconstrained models for df and chi squared. Overall dataset compared to SSO1.
Metric invariance is supported as the chi squared difference test for the overall dataset of the measurement groups was shown to be acceptable and displayed variance from the individual SSO results for the chi squared test, as illustrated in Table 7.8. Non-significant p values above 0.05 were also presented, thus suggesting when factor loadings are forced to be equivalent the models are showing variance. As this was achieved the constructs tested are fully invariant.

The invariance testing, and goodness of fit measures for the overall data set and three SSOs, suggest a well-fitting model to the data with each of the required indices achieving or exceeding the required cut-off point. All models presented different loadings and regression weights for and between factors, illustrating the differences in consumer perception discussed earlier, and the resulting effects on the variables within the model. The variance between factor loadings and regression weights between the three models, while less than in the linear representation of the framework, are still significant, suggesting that the final respecification of the model was justified, and also supports the assumption of no systematic bias being present within the data. This contrast between models echoes the findings of the invariance testing, in that both the models and data sets are suitable and appropriate for use in investigating the research questions.

7.5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTION FINDINGS

The structural model derived for use has been initially shown to display an appropriate level of reliability, validity, and goodness of fit through the use of a range of EFA, CFA, and SEM statistic tools. The path diagram representing the model underwent vigorous modification in order to satisfy both statistical needs, but also to provide a tool to fully investigate the research aims of this project, while remaining aligned to existing
knowledge and the factors and scale items derived. As illustrated in Table 7.4, the model, when applied to the data sets from the three participating SSOs and as an overall dataset, provides a range of cut-off points safely above the suggested goodness of fit cut-off points.

Final tests between the variables and constructs enabled hypotheses to be developed in order to investigate the research questions further. These are developed below and then tested at aggregate levels, as well as with data separately from the three SSOs. The research issue and questions forming the foundation of this investigation were derived and described in detail in Chapter One and are summarised below.

The overarching issue this study aims to determine is; *Is there a disconnect between consumer expectations and organisation IMC functions in Tier Two state sporting organisations, and does a gap or disconnect exist between IMC delivered by Australian sport organisations and best practice methods suggested in literature?*

This overarching research aim is a function of five research questions posed within the conceptual framework. With the mediators and inhibitors introduced earlier in RQ3 addressed the final research questions are now discussed. These five questions follow the direction of the strategic function of IMC and are as follows;

*RQ1 What digital communication/IMC strategies are adopted and implemented by Tier 2 Australian SSOs, and what is their digital orientation?*

*RQ2 What are the consumer attitudes to IMC strategies adopted and implemented by Australian Tier 2 SSOs?*

*RQ3 Is perceived service quality directly linked to consumer relationship quality within Tier 2 Australian SSOs?*
**RQ4** What consumer engagement behaviours does this relationship quality facilitate?

**RQ5** What functional organisational outcomes are achieved through these consumer behaviours?

Research Questions 1 and 2 were explored in detail in Chapter Four and Five, where the qualitative data obtained from interview participants was compared to the descriptive statistics from the corresponding SSOs consumer perception surveys.

Investigation of Research Questions 3, 4 and 5 can now be undertaken with the proposed conceptual framework. Based on the final conceptual framework outlined in Figure 7.4, a number of hypotheses were derived in order to address the Research Questions 3-5. These hypotheses are introduced and their relationship to the conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 7.5.
Figure 7.5 Final Respecified Model- Hypotheses Labelled.
7.5.1. Hypothesis Outline

Research Question 3 aimed to identify any significant relationships linking the functional benefit and experiential benefit constructs developed with relationship quality and consumer satisfaction dimensions. These questions were based on the conceptual framework suggested from literature presented in Figure 1.1 and the development of the research questions were outlined in Section 2.8. As such the following five hypotheses can be stated;

Hypothesis 1: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction

Hypothesis 2: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 3: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction

Hypothesis 4: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 5: Satisfaction has a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Rationale and development of research question three and the relevant constructs were fully developed in Chapter Two. Relating them to the conceptual framework suggests a direct positive relationship between functional benefits and relationship quality and satisfaction, experiential benefits and relationship quality and satisfaction, and satisfaction and relationship quality. The conceptual framework developed also proposed these relationships. As such, Hypotheses 1-5 aim to test and measure these relationships.
Research Question 4 aimed to test and measure the relationships between the relationship quality construct and the elements that comprise it. To measure this, a significant positive correlation needs to exist between the relationship quality construct and the items used to derive this construct (i.e. loyalty, commitment, reciprocity, trust and intimacy). These relationships were tested and measured using both EFA and CFA processes and the results and discussion of these findings is presented as a measurement model in Section 6.4.4. An overview of these findings is presented after Hypothesis 5 results.

Research Question 5 aimed to determine which of the functional organisational outcomes or behavioural intentions are obtained by the participating organisations through the consumer behaviours. The framework proposed, and existing literature suggested, a positive, direct influence of relationship quality and satisfaction on behavioural intentions. To address this, it needs to be identified if there is a significant, positive relationship between Functional Benefits and Behavioural Intentions, Experiential Benefits and Behavioural Intentions, Relationship Quality and Behavioural Intentions, and Satisfaction and Behavioural Intentions. As such, Hypotheses 6 a, b, c, and d were proposed as follows;

Hypothesis 6a: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Hypothesis 6b: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Hypothesis 6c: Satisfaction has a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions

Hypothesis 6d: Relationship Quality has a direct positive relationship with Behavioural Intentions
The following sections provide an overview of the hypothesis testing undertaken, both for the individual SSO data sets and the overall data sets. From these findings it is evident that the proposed hypotheses are supported except for one instance which involves Experiential Benefits of SSO3 not displaying a significant positive correlation to the Behavioural Intentions construct. These findings and a more detailed review and discussion of the hypotheses testing follows.

### 7.5.1.1 Hypothesis 1 Results

**Hypothesis 1: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction**

Hypothesis 1 is supported, as illustrated in Table 7.9 and using the final, respecified conceptual model outlined in Figure 7.4. Results provide evidence that functional benefits had a positive, direct and significant correlation with satisfaction across all three organisations (0.73 for overall, 0.77 for SSO1, 0.82 for SSO2, and 0.75 for SSO3). This range of standardised effects indicate that the functional benefit construct exerts a high degree of influence on satisfaction levels across all of the sport organisations. Additionally, the $r^2$ statistic suggests a positive direct relationship as functional benefits account for 27% of the variance in satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th>Std Est</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<tr>
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<td>4.13</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>SSO2</td>
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<td>3.98</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SSO3</td>
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<td>2.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5.1.2. Hypothesis 1 Discussion

Functional benefits, being a strong driver of consumer satisfaction, supports the findings of the foundation studies in general marketing settings (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Chan & Li, 2010; Dholakia et al., 2009). These findings suggest obtaining tangible benefits is one of the key motivators for consumers to engage in IMC with organisations. Hence, a high perception of the quality of functional benefits received leads to high levels of satisfaction.

This is further supported through Park and Kim’s (2000) study which provides evidence of the positive effect of functional benefits on the satisfaction of consumers. In this study, the authors measured the relationship between functional benefit and perceived relationship investment, which they defined as the satisfaction a consumer displays towards the organisations offerings. A strong positive standardised estimate of 0.73 was recorded for this relationship for this research. Furthermore, Hur, Ko and Valacich (2011) measured consumer perceptions of sport web quality based on elements employed in this research, including information, interaction, design, and system and found that the construct displayed a 0.93 path coefficient to the satisfaction construct employed in their study. This significant, strong and positive relationship identified, highlights the importance of consumer perceptions of functional benefits. Further, it suggests that the functional benefit elements of IMC consumption strongly drive consumer satisfaction.

Consumer satisfaction has been shown to be an antecedent to positive consumer behavioural intentions in sporting organisations (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). The strength of the relationship between the two constructs suggests a practical implication of an increase in consumer perception of the functional benefits provided by an organisations IMC, will drive an increase of satisfaction, and hence increase the likelihood of positive consumer intentions and functional outcomes for the organisation (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). Evident in the results, each of the participating
organisations measured slightly different strengths of relationships between functional benefits and consumer satisfaction, potentially resulting in higher levels of desirable outcomes compared to the other participants.

7.5.2.1 Hypothesis 2 Results

Hypothesis 2: Functional Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 2 is supported, as illustrated in Table 7.10, where it is demonstrated functional benefits displays a positive, direct and significant correlation with relationship quality. The standardised effect of functional benefits on satisfaction is 0.51 for overall, 0.53 for SSO1, 0.47 for SSO2, and 0.44 for SSO3. This standardised effect indicates that the functional benefit construct exerts a moderate degree of influence on satisfaction levels for all participating sporting bodies, with slight differences in the strengths of relationship displayed across them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th>Std Est</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>6.89</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>SSO1</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.2.2 Hypothesis 2 Discussion

Functional benefits were found to have a positive effect on relationship quality, although this effect was only of moderate strength and much lower than the effect of functional benefits on satisfaction. This is in line with existing findings of the relationship
between consumer perceptions and satisfaction and relationship quality (Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Chan & Li, 2010; Dholakia et al., 2009) which support the results obtained in this research. Baird and Parasnis (2011) found a strong, positive relationship between functional benefits and relationship quality, and suggested this is potentially due to increased engagement between the consumers and the organisation, due to the functional benefits provided by the organisations digital offerings. Although the strength of the relationship measured here is weaker than that displayed by functional benefits to satisfaction, the results of the above studies which observed a significant, positive relationship are supported, and as a result Hypothesis 2 is also supported.

In contrast to the above findings, Park and Kim’s (2000) study provided conflicting evidence. Using similar constructs and scale items, these authors found no positive effect of functional benefit on relationship quality when examining the role of social networking sites on relationship quality of brand communities. The author’s measured relationship strength was a standardised estimate of -0.03 representing a weak negative correlation, denoting a slight negative driving force from functional benefits to relationship quality. Park and Kim (2000) suggest this result could be attributed to the extent that the organisations studied, all provide functional benefits in their IMC, hence becoming an expected element of service delivery. Increasing consumer satisfaction also did not necessarily enhance relationship quality with consumers. This could potentially provide explanations as to why the relationship strength observed in this study between functional benefits and relationship quality are weaker than the relationship between functional benefits and satisfaction.

Practically, functional benefits including interaction, information and fulfilment have been shown to increase levels of consumer engagement, both in a generic marketing context and sport specific cases (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). This increase in consumer engagement has been shown to enhance the relationship quality between a sport
organisation and its members (Kim & Trail, 2011; Kim, Trail & Ko 2011; Kim, James & Kim, 2013). Further, relationship quality has been shown to increase positive behavioural intentions in consumers, including positive word of mouth, attendance, media consumption and merchandise consumption (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000).

7.5.3.1 Hypothesis 3 Results

Hypothesis 3: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Satisfaction

Table 7.11 and Hypothesis 3 provides evidence that experiential benefits derived from use of IMC offerings, has a positive effect on levels of consumer satisfaction. Results illustrate that the construct displays a positive, direct and significant correlation with satisfaction across all three organisations studied. The standardised effect of experiential benefits on satisfaction is 0.29 for overall, 0.29 for SSO1, 0.24 for SSO2, and 0.31 for SSO3. This range of standardised effects indicate that the experiential benefit construct exerts a moderate degree of influence on satisfaction levels across all of the sport organisations. This is also supported with r² results showing the direct relationship between experiential benefit and satisfaction accounts for 13% of the variance experience by that construct.

Table 7.11  Hypothesis 3 Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th>Std Est</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Hyp 3 Ex Ben- Satis</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SSO2</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.3.2 Hypothesis 3 Discussion

While Hypothesis 2 showed functional benefits had a high level of impact on satisfaction, experiential benefits exerted only moderate influence on the satisfaction construct. Research carried out by Park and Kim (2000) investigating social network and
brand relationships, and similar work by O’Malley and Marsden (2008) and Malhotra et al. (2012), also suggested a statistically significant, positive relationship between experiential benefit and satisfaction. This was of a lesser strength than relationships between functional benefits and satisfaction, and experiential benefits and relationship quality. In particular, Park and Kim (2000) identified that the strength of the relationship between experiential benefit and perceived relationship investment (satisfaction), presented a standardised estimate of 0.20. While this is again lower than the standardised estimates obtained in this research, the magnitude difference between the other relationships measured falls in line with the findings presented in Table 7.11 and supports the Hypothesis.

To determine the large difference in results of the relationships between functional benefits and satisfaction, and experiential benefits and satisfaction, reference can be made to the definition of satisfaction and the scale items employed to develop this construct. Service satisfaction, as posited in previous research (Kim, Trail & Ko, 2011; Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010) focused on the ability of product quality and service environment quality to effect consumer satisfaction levels. As such, it is a measurement of consumers’ subjective perception and evaluation of service performance, to address certain needs and wants of the consumer (Tsuji et al., 2007; Yoshida & James, 2010). This is further supported by Baird and Parasnis (2011), who explain that obtaining tangible benefits are one of the key motivating factors in engaging with IMC services. Thus, the definition used in this research, and the construct developed, focusses heavily on the tangible outcomes of the IMC services provided by the sporting organisations, thereby providing a plausible explanation for the differences in relationship strength.
7.5.4.1 Hypothesis 4 Results

Hypothesis 4: Experiential Benefits have a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality

Hypothesis 4 is supported, where Table 7.12 demonstrates experiential benefits display a positive, direct and significant correlation with relationship quality. The standardised effect of functional benefits on satisfaction is 0.69 for overall, 0.64 for SSO1, 0.67 for SSO2, and 0.34 for SSO3. This standardised effect indicates that the experiential benefit construct exerts a high degree of influence on satisfaction levels for all participating sporting bodies, with only slight differences in the strengths of relationship displayed across them.

Table 7.12 Hypothesis 4 Results

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dataset</th>
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<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Sig</th>
<th>Supported</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>9.16</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSO1</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
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<td>SSO2</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>11.22</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>10.67</td>
<td>&lt;0.01</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.4.2 Hypothesis 4 Discussion

Integrated marketing communications have moved away from the one-way presentation of information from an organisation to consumers, to a two-way conversational environment which is social, interactive and entertaining (Chaney et al., 2010; Malhotra et al., 2012; Park & Kim, 2000). This two-way communication and interaction has been shown to enhance the engagement levels between consumers and organisations, and as a result of this is a strong driver of relationship quality (Brown et al., 2007; Fournier, 1998; Li et al., 2007; Park & Kim, 2000).
This transition is supported in results of this research, where it was suggested and supported, that experiential benefits have a significant, positive relationship with relationship quality. Furthermore, Park and Kim (2000), in a similar context of researching social media networks, tested and measured this Hypothesis and found that the positive impact of experiential benefits on relationship quality contrasted to functional benefit, in that experiential benefits displayed a strong, positive relationship with a standardised estimate of 0.93, while functional benefits and relationship quality presented a non-significant, negative correlation with a standardised estimate of -0.03 (Park & Kim, 2000). While this research did not return results as extreme as that, the difference was also large and can be suggested to reflect similar reasons.

Practically, for organisations, this service dominant logic and conversational exchange should be included in IMC strategies, as it has been shown through social and interaction benefits of IMC delivery, that consumer engagement increases leading to positive functional benefits for the organisation, including positive word of mouth and purchase behaviours (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000).

7.5.5.1 Hypothesis 5 Results

*Hypothesis 5: Satisfaction has a direct positive relationship with Relationship Quality*

Table 7.13 supports Hypothesis 5, where satisfaction has a positive, direct and significant correlation with relationship quality across all three organisations. The standardised effect of experiential benefits on satisfaction is 0.44 for overall, 0.47 for SSO1, 0.38 for SSO2, and 0.45 for SSO3. This range of standardised effects indicate that the relationship quality construct exerts a moderate degree of influence on satisfaction levels across all of the sport organisations. This is further supported by the $r^2$ values observed for the relationship. Across all three SSOs the direct variance in relationship quality due to
satisfaction as measured by the $r^2$ statistic was 0.32 for overall, 0.35 for SSO1, 0.29 for SSO2 and 0.34 for SSO3, suggesting a significant, positive effect of a moderate strength.

Table 7.13  Hypothesis 5 Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Dataset</th>
<th>Std Est</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>2.25</td>
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<td>SSO1</td>
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</table>

7.5.5.2 Hypothesis 5 Discussion

Consumer satisfaction towards an organisations services, in this case IMC, has been shown in numerous studies both in a general marketing and sport specific context to positively influence the attitude of consumers. This leads to higher rates of engagement, higher levels of loyalty, and positive behavioural intentions (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000). Likewise, the same characteristics have been suggested for the relationship quality between a consumer and the organisation. It has also been suggested that consumer satisfaction experiences a positive effect from relationship quality between the consumer and organisation (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), increasing the potential for positive behavioural intentions from consumers. This research, however, aimed to determine whether consumer satisfaction as operationalised, provided only a direct positive effect on relationship quality, or whether a direct, positive influence on behavioural intentions exists. This direct effect of consumer satisfaction on relationship quality is shown in the results as a moderate positive influence, responsible for between 29% and 44% of variance in dependent or outcome variables.

Interactions between service quality (functional and experiential benefits in this instance), consumer satisfaction, relationship quality dimensions, and behavioural intentions
in a sporting context, have undergone limited research. However, Yoshida and James (2010), Koo et al. (2008), and Wilcox et al. (2006) studied the interactions between these constructs in a range of sports specific contexts. Yoshida and James (2010) investigated American and Japanese baseball and football spectators, identifying service quality (measured in their study through functional and outcome quality) influenced satisfaction, and through the satisfaction construct, had a driving influence on the spectator’s behavioural intentions. Koo et al. (2008) tested and measured the influence of service quality dimensions on relationship quality, while Wilcox et al. (2006) studied American spectators across a number of sports, and identified a mediating influence from spectator satisfaction in the relationship between service quality perceptions of the spectators and their behavioural intentions. Studies by Koo et al. (2008) and particularly Wilcox et al. (2006) drew numerous similarities to this research, both in topic and method and, as such, similar findings in these studies as presented by this Hypothesis are supported.

7.5.6.1 Research Question 5 Findings and Discussion

A review of the EFA and CFA results presented in Chapter Six, coupled with results summarised in Table 7.14, outline the very strong positive correlations present between the relationship construct and the dimensions used to conceptualise it. With results for the whole dataset, and across all three participating organisations presenting factor loadings above 0.65 for standardised estimates, relationship quality is shown to display a strong direct positive relationship between the factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Commit</th>
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<td>.87</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
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<td>.84</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSO3</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.70</td>
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</table>
7.5.6.2 Research Question 5 Discussion

Use of the behavioural sub dimensions of loyalty, reciprocity, commitment, intimacy and trust in operationalising a relationship quality construct, is widely documented both in a general marketing context and a sports specific setting. Cialdini and Goldstein, (2004) Mavondo and Rodrigo (2001), Oliver (1999), Hollebeek (2011), and Anderson and Narus (1990) all operationalised the sub dimensions of relationship quality listed above. They identified positive relationships between the sub dimensions, and also the sub dimensions and a higher order relationship quality construct. In a sports specific setting, studies by Kim et al. (2011) and Kim, James & Kim (2013), support the above research in the use and operationalisation of the listed sub dimensions. They identified elements of the relationship construct when researching the attitudes and behaviours of sports spectators and consumers, and also sports consumers towards sponsor organisations. Furthermore, Kim, Trail and Ko (2011) test and quantify the relationships between the five sub dimensions and relationship quality, and extend that to investigating the relationship between relationship quality and behavioural intentions, including between the sub dimensions and behavioural intentions. The correlations between the sub dimensions and their relationship to the relationship quality construct were significant and positive, with all standardised estimates exceeding the cut-off points suggested by Hair and Anderson (2009). Many of them displayed very high loadings above 0.75. These figures closely align to the results of this research, further supporting the results of this study and also supporting the Hypothesis.

7.5.7.1 Hypothesis 6 Results

Hypothesis 6: Behavioural Intentions are directly influenced by relationships with a) Functional Benefits, b) Experiential Benefits, c) Satisfaction, and d) Relationship Quality.
Table 7.15 illustrates the existence of significant direct positive relationships between investigated behavioural intention antecedents conceptualised in this research, to the behavioural intentions across both the overall data set and for all of the organisations involved. These direct positive relationships support the Hypothesis as represented both by the standardised estimates for the correlations, and additionally by the $r^2$ values measuring the variance in behavioural intention as caused by the relevant antecedent. These $r^2$ values follow; Sat – BI 12%, RQ- BI 28%, FB- BI 6%, and EB-BI 4%. These results represented a range of influences from weak to moderate with one exception; the relationship between experiential benefit and behavioural intentions for SSO3 did not return a significant result hence the hypothesis cannot be supported for this case. A suggested explanation for this anomaly is discussed in the section below.

<table>
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<th>Hypothesis</th>
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<td>FB-BI</td>
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<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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7.5.7.2 Hypothesis 6 Discussion

The relationship between service quality (operationalised in this study as functional and experiential benefits), and behavioural intentions, is well established with a number of studies being undertaken in numerous general marketing settings (Anderson & Fornell, 1994; Carlson & O’Cass, 2010; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). In addition to this, the relationship between consumer satisfaction and behavioural intentions is equally well documented across numerous service contexts (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Oliver, 1999). These studies report that both the service quality and satisfaction constructs present a positive direct effect on a range of behavioural intentions, in line with the outcomes employed in this research. A direct relationship between satisfaction and behavioural intentions was shown (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Anderson & Fornell, 1994). A direct relationship between service quality factors and behavioural intentions was identified (Carlson & O’Cass, 2010; Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Also, significant positive relationships, where satisfaction and service quality have exerted an influence on each other before displaying a strong prediction of behavioural intentions were observed (Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Oliver, 1999).

In a sport specific context Kim, Trail and Ko (2011) test and quantify the relationship between general relationship quality and individual behavioural intentions. This included attendance, media consumption and merchandise consumption, and showed quite strong direct relationships between these, with relationship quality presenting high standardised estimates ranging between 0.59 to 0.62. Results also indicated that the general relationship quality construct is responsible for 38% of variance in attendance intention, 41% of media consumption and 35% of merchandise consumption when applying the $r^2$ statistic. Theodorakis et al. (2013) also support the above Hypothesis in their study predicting the
behavioural intentions of professional football spectators. In this study, the authors show direct relationships between satisfaction and behavioural intentions with a standardised estimate of 0.47 and $r^2$ of 0.43. They also show direct relationships between functional and experiential benefit elements of service quality (operationalised as functional and outcome quality), and the behavioural intentions construct conceptualised for that study. These general and sport specific examples of existing work support the Hypothesis 6a-d here.

Hypothesis 6b regarding experiential benefit and behavioural intentions presented an SSO where the hypothesis was not supported. SSO3 returned a non-significant result for the relationship, suggesting that the experiential benefits consumers derive from their IMC services do not influence, and cannot be used, as a predictor for behavioural intentions. SSO3 stands out from the other two organisations, as the participation and competition opportunities provided for the sport are managed and communicated through outside parties. Due to this it can be suggested that minimal engagement between the consumer and the organisation, or consumer to other consumers occurs through the SSO’s IMC channels, as such, creating a barrier to realising any experiential or hedonistic benefits from being gained from this community involvement (Wilcox et al., 2006; Park & Kim, 2000).

7.6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In addition to the research questions addressed previously in Chapters Four and Five, and the Hypothesis results and discussion above, the overarching research aims of this study ask; Is there a disconnect between consumer expectations and organisation IMC functions in Tier Two state sporting organisations, and does a gap or disconnect exist between IMC delivered by Australian sport organisations and best practice methods suggested in literature?
Research Questions 1-5 were developed to assist in addressing this research aim with the data obtained from the participating organisations applied to the conceptual framework developed. Chapters Four and Five compared the perceptions of the delivery of IMC services by Australian SSOs from both an organisational and a consumer perspective. Organisations admitted there were areas that were in need of improvement, and mean scores for the consumer perceptions of the constructs developed ratings far below the maximum score presented in Table 5.9. It can be suggested that perceptions of consumers are in line with attitudes of the organisations in regard to the quality of the IMC function delivered. Both perspectives recognise the importance of IMC, define and categorise similar tools and activities as IMC channels, and believe IMC can assist organisations to achieve similar goals. Hence, this research shows there are no major gaps or disconnects between the attitudes of the organisations providing the IMC service, and the perceptions of consumers of this service delivered. However, as the survey tool was based on a 7-point Likert scale, the average results for consumer perceptions of IMC service ranging between 3.98 to 5.22 suggest scope for improvement in IMC delivery by the organisations, and displays a disconnect or gap between the suggested best practice methods of IMC delivery and the service provided by Tier Two Australian SSOs.

Building on these descriptive statistics, when the conceptual framework developed to investigate these perceptions is studied, it is observed that many of the relationships between the constructs derived to predict behavioural intentions are quite low, and variance in these is due to other factors. Revisiting the overall path diagram presented in Figure 7.4, it is apparent that the relationships between constructs and the variance in $r^2$ values attributed are low to moderate, indicating the influence of other factors.

In particular, the variance of consumer satisfaction due to measured elements in this research is quite low, further reinforced by the high error loading presented for the construct.
This suggests outside variables or factors influencing consumer satisfaction with the organisations IMC exist that were not tested in this study. Existing studies investigating participation and consumption of sport have identified myriad reasons for this influence ranging from geographical location, family history, third party media coverage, and previous history with the sport (Wilcox et al., 2006). Although outside the scope of this research, it is important to consider the impact of these factors, as it could be suggested in the results the influence exerted by them on consumer satisfaction was higher than that of measured variables tested.

Although the conceptual model provides a workable tool to define the strategic IMC process, the weakness or non-existence of some relationships throughout the framework indicate existence of gaps or disconnects between the service delivered and the service expected.

7.7. SUMMARY

Chapter Seven comprised two sections. Section One demonstrated the process of developing the final specified conceptual framework, including structural tests and exploration of model fit. This provided a robust base for Hypotheses testing for Research Questions 3-5, and a review of descriptive statistics and SEM results for Research Question 6. Results and discussion supported the proposed hypotheses for all but Hypothesis 6b, regarding the relationship between experiential benefit and behavioural outcomes of SSO3. This can be explained as a function of the use of outside event organisers and promoters creating a barrier to consumer engagement to SSO3, and as a result, a weak relationship between experiential benefits experienced by those consumers in relation to behavioural intentions.
The support for the hypothesis testing and the results for Research Question 6 are in line with the existing knowledge covered in the literature review, and allow these findings to be integrated into the overall conclusion. The concluding Chapter summarises the findings, and aligns them with the relevant research questions and study aims. This enables the overarching research aims to be discussed, with implications then derived from this discussion leading to contributions to knowledge in practical, theoretical, and methodological areas. Further areas for research and limitations of this investigation were also considered.
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis investigated the strategic IMC processes implemented by Australian sporting organisations, to determine whether these activities were fulfilling the needs and wants of their consumers, while also employing best practice suggested by literature. The overarching research aim was to identify whether there was a gap or disconnect between the IMC function sport organisations believe they are providing to the market and the consumer perceptions of this, and if this IMC function is being adopted and implemented in an effective and efficient manner when compared to best practice methods. A mixed methods investigation was undertaken with qualitative data obtained from interviews with employees from three sport organisations, and quantitative data from consumer surveys. A pilot study shaped the scale items used to measure the consumer perceptions, and these scale items formed the basis of a conceptual framework developed to test and measure the IMC function.

The data obtained from these processes showed that sport bodies admitted shortfalls and areas for improvement in the delivery of IMC, which was aligned with the consumer perceptions of IMC delivery. However, comparing the practices undertaken by the SSOs with existing literature, and the consumer perception scores for IMC elements, a disconnect or gap between suggested best practice methods leading to effective and efficient use of IMC was identified. The resulting conceptual framework provides a theoretical and practical guideline and foundation to further explore IMC in sport organisations, and offers the capability to refine, test and measure relationships within the IMC function.

Within the Australian sporting landscape, the lack of resources available to not for profit sports endangers their ability to provide important participation opportunities to the community. Participation in sporting activities, and membership of sporting clubs and
associations, provides important physical and mental health benefits to the community, including acting as a tool for social inclusion. With digital and new media providing the opportunity to present IMC in a cost-effective way to engage a large audience, sports organisations need to maximise the positive functional benefits available to them through leveraging IMC.

Limited existing theoretical knowledge is available regarding the use of IMC in not for profit sports, and practical actions carried out by these sports organisations are commonly ad hoc, inefficient, and based on strategies employed in non-similar contexts. Identification of these outcomes lead to the development of a conceptual framework to investigate the organisational and consumer perceptions of IMC messages.

Chapter Eight summarises the key findings, providing practical contributions to sport organisation operations, theoretical contributions to expand on the limited academic research carried out in this context, and to fill in gaps in knowledge. Limitations of the investigation and further research opportunities extending this project are also discussed.

8.2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapters One and Two of the thesis introduced a number of key relationship marketing concepts from an in depth exploration of relevant extant literature. IMC was suggested to provide a number of positive functional benefits in a sport context through increasing communication, interaction and value co-creation with participants and members. These outcomes were refined to a not for profit setting with increasing revenue, participation, awareness and enhancing public perception of the sport identified. Existing theoretical models were reviewed with a systems process model of inputs, throughputs, and outputs selected to provide a foundation for the development of the conceptual framework. General
marketing literature and sport based studies utilising SERVQUAL and sport specific derivations were synthesised to select appropriate relationship marketing constructs and scale items to develop the proposed conceptual framework and consumer perception survey. Constructs including functional benefits, experiential benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality and behavioural intentions were selected and relationships between the constructs explored. Extant literature identified a number of IMC platforms used by not for profit sports to be considered for inclusion in this study. These platforms, after interviews with participating organisations to determine whether or not they have been implemented, were introduced with social media, customer relationship marketing/database marketing, and website content comprising the IMC platforms investigated in this project. With literature providing a proposed initial framework and relevant IMC delivery tools data collection and analysis could take place.

Chapter Four detailed interviews undertaken with staff members of the participating SSOs. Through these interviews it was apparent that SSOs regard IMC as crucial to the success of their sports, but they can only provide a rudimentary IMC function due to a lack of resources and knowledge. These resources include staff numbers, staff skill sets, and financial constraints. The lack of knowledge identified, concerns both information about current consumers and the target market, and also evaluation of current activities and strategies. This impacts on the SSOs capacity to engage consumers and develop relationships preventing positive consumer behaviours from occurring.

Chapter Five refined existing scale items and constructs from literature to ensure their suitability. Five constructs were consolidated, these being, experiential benefits, functional benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality, and behavioural intentions. A number of these constructs consist of sub-dimensions with functional benefits consisting of information, interaction, system quality, design quality, and fulfilment. Relationship quality consisted of
loyalty, commitment, reciprocity, intimacy and trust sub-dimensions. The behavioural intentions construct was built from awareness, revenue, participation, and perception. These constructs and sub-dimensions were then tested and measured using scale items through an online survey distributed to members and participants of the three Australian SSOs.

The results of the survey process were presented in Chapter Five. These results identified a range of descriptive results which indicate that consumers understand the importance of IMC and recognise several IMC tools, and organisational goals achievable using IMC tools. Above-average to moderate mean scores of perceptions of the quality of the IMC function provided was identified through psychometric testing of the scale items developed. Further analysis was undertaken with these results comparing mean scores across the three SSOs, through a range of demographic categories and user typologies. Comparisons showed variances in perceptions across a range of user categories including; across organisations, across ages, playing level, playing experience and internet use preferences. The results suggest that a non-specific, untailored approach to IMC and digital messaging, is an inefficient strategy to maximise the potential of IMC across the consumers tested.

Chapters Six and Seven presented a framework developed and refined to investigate the relationships between developed constructs to assist in addressing the research question and research aims posed. Relationships were established between consumer perceptions (functional benefits and experiential benefits), relationship quality and satisfaction, and relationship quality, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Significant, positive, direct effects were identified for these relationships. This addresses component a) of the research aim concerning whether the framework developed accurately represents the IMC function of Australian SSOs. Practically, this framework can provide SSOs with a resource to refine their IMC delivered to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the function, and theoretically, it can form the foundation of further research. Taking advantage of the theoretical
implications of this framework, hypotheses developed were tested, with all but one supported, and these results were applied to address the research questions.

8.3. CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The conceptual framework developed was tested to show if it presented an accurate representation of the strategic function of digital communication (IMC) in Tier Two Australian SSOs. To develop this framework a number of management and marketing approaches were used to create a reliable theoretical foundation as suggested by Filo et al. (2015). Firstly organisational performance theory was visited to study SSO operations regarding effectiveness and efficiency of actions and resource allocation. Review of extant literature supported the use of a systems model of performance to investigate the use of IMC in the participating organisations. This literature supported use of the basic framework developed in Whitburn et al. (2018) with proposed constructs and dimensions added from relevant literature based on a SERVQUAL model and refined for use in a sport context. With a firm theoretical foundation, the refinement of constructs and selection of scale items was undertaken then data collection carried out. With the framework tested for reliability and validity, the five research questions developed from literature to address the overarching research aims were investigated. Research Question 1 explored which IMC strategies, tools and activities are adopted and implemented by Australian SSOs. Research Question 2 tested the consumer perceptions of this IMC delivery and measured the consumer perceptions of service quality of the offerings. Research Questions 3, 4, and 5 employed the conceptual framework to investigate the relationships between the service quality, relationship quality and behavioural intentions of consumers. Finally, the overarching research aims sought to identify disconnects between consumer expectations and organisational offerings and
suggested best practice methods arising from the results obtained from RQ1-RQ5. The conceptual framework was presented in Figure 1.1.

8.3.1. Exploring IMC implementation and adoption of Australian SSOs (RQ1)

Research Question 1 was concerned with the investigation of Australian Tier Two SSOs and identified divergent philosophical and strategic approaches to IMC, including the tools used and activities provided. Similarities were noted in specific areas, expressed through a lack of strategic integration, creativity, and proactivity. Although these aspects were highlighted as crucial to organisational operations, alongside the overall importance of IMC, they were identified as areas of concern. Managers were consistent with their views pertaining to the importance of IMC, but responses revealed that each individual SSO approached IMC in a variety of ad hoc ways, with little evaluation of effects of IMC on functional benefits and consumer perceptions about the IMC delivered.

SSO respondents were mindful of the opportunities IMC presented, and they conveyed an understanding of the function it could play within their organisation. Their overall belief was that this function was likely to increase in the future. This belief was offset by a lack of preparation and planning by these organisations towards implementing IMC strategies. As such, strategies could be considered predominantly ad-hoc and reactive. This indicates that SSO respondents realise that a more strategic and advanced philosophy and approach is required, and that their IMC activities are not necessarily always integrated, strategic, or proactive. Such views and responses may be attributable to the size and resource capability of these ‘medium-sized’ SSOs where a lack of staff hours and knowledge to devote to IMC can lead to less than best practice implementation.

While there was agreement about the importance of IMC, the SSOs referred to their activities as mainly being ad-hoc and derived, or based on following the lead they identified
from the approach other organisations take towards their IMC. This indicates that the strategies and activities that are employed are still evolving. Overall, the results suggest an understanding of the importance and necessity behind implementing IMC effectively, including the value it could provide, but also an understanding of further development being required in order to properly utilise its function.

With respect to the tools and activities employed by the participating SSOs, interviewees were asked what they believe they achieve from their IMC activities, the goals sought from their utilisation, and how they go about achieving these goals. Couched in each SSOs philosophy and strategies, and somewhat dependent on the capabilities available to the SSO, similar tools and activities were identified between the organisations. Social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook, alongside the SSO website, were most commonly referred to as being important IMC options. This similarity of response illustrates how IMC from a conceptual and operational perspective is dominated by these particular media.

The value of social media in delivering cost effective and timely content to large audiences, and acting as an information source as well as an engagement tool, was a common response. In addition to social media tools and activities, SSO websites emerged as a critical tool for all organisations. The website was consistently referred to as representing a core attribute for IMC activities, while importantly also serving as an information sharing platform. Core features of the participating SSOs website provided e-commerce, social media, CRM, and information content for members and the wider community. Information sharing included facilitating sponsor relations, information about events and results, membership and other offers, news stories, and educational resources for athletes, coaches, and volunteers. Social media activities (primarily Facebook and Twitter), direct mail through EDMs and websites were the only IMC activities consistently cited by all participants.
To seek a better understanding of the diversity of tools used, respondents were presented with a list of IMC activities and asked to identify their relevance and use in their SSO. Online forums, database marketing, broadcast, e-commerce, gamification, crowd funding, online auctions, fantasy sport and online advertising were provided as part of this list. Responses indicated minimal current application and unlikely planned usage or uptake of additional aspects beyond social media, EDM and website usage.

Adoption in the context of Shaltoni and West’s (2010) EMO framework refers to the frequency of use of IMC tools, the alignment between these tools and the organisations overall goals, and the use of IMC tools for commercial transactions. All SSOs utilised at least some form of IMC activity to inform, persuade and motivate the community into adopting favourable perceptions and actions towards the organisation. This response clearly aligns with the definition of the goals of e-promotion (Bulut et al., 2012; Masterman & Wood, 2006). However, in most cases, the activity of SSO websites was predominantly concerned with information. Persuasion and motivation activities connected with the website were largely ad hoc in nature, with only a basic strategic process implemented, and the tools which were utilised were limited to social media, EDM and website platforms. This indicates essentially an emergent or embryonic level of IMC activity.

One of the overarching research aims of this thesis was to identify if a disconnect between the IMC service provided by SSOs and best practice methods existed. Comparing data from the participating SSOs with Shaltoni and West’s (2010) framework, variances in philosophy, strategies, activities, and goals clearly were evident, showing a disconnect between the observed IMC function of Australian sport organisations and suggested best practice.
8.3.2. Consumer Perceptions of Organisational IMC Delivery (RQ2)

Research question one identified the IMC philosophy, strategies and tools and activities employed and delivered by Australian Tier Two SSOs. These SSOs acknowledged the importance of IMC and admitted to areas of delivery they could improve. Research question two asked what the consumer perceptions of the IMC function provided by Australian SSOs are, and whether these perceptions are in line with organisational attitudes. Three major tools, social media, CRM through EDM, and website based content were identified as being implemented by SSOs.

Existing literature was employed to gather relevant scale items and constructs. A pilot study assisted in refinement of these scale items, and an online survey of participants was initiated to test and measure these scale items. Responses to the survey sought perceptions of the IMC service quality as delivered by their particular SSO. The scale items employed were derived from an extensive literature review of both general and sports specific relationship and service quality studies, and the pilot respondents’ responses to each item. A Likert scale was employed, where 1 represented the respondent strongly disagreeing with the statement, and 7 representing strongly agreeing with the statement. Consumers were tested as an overall population sample, individual SSO cases, and user groups based on respondent characteristics. These results were presented in Tables 5.21 through 5.26 with discussion that followed. These findings lead to the following conclusions being made.

The overarching research aim was to identify the existence of a disconnect between organisation attitudes towards the IMC function, and consumer perceptions of this service. RQ1 showed SSOs are realistic in the quality of the IMC function they provide, and acknowledge shortcomings and room for improvement across all elements of the function. This is aligned to consumer perceptions of the IMC service delivered. Results of consumer
perceptions show an overall perception of the IMC quality to be above-average to moderate (4-5 mean rating). This above-average to moderate rating suggests consumers identify the importance of IMC in the consumption of their sport, but also highlights that the needs and wants of these consumers are not being completely satisfied. As such, the similarities between consumer perceptions of IMC and organisational attitudes suggest that no gap or disconnect exists.

SSOs recognise the need to improve their IMC service, and consumers agree that this needs to occur. A core issue that emerges when identifying the requirements is that the SSOs identify the need for improvement, but are aware of their resourcing inadequacies. Having limited resources and expertise available to maximise the IMC function is clearly detrimental to the SSO, and in turn to the experience achieved for the consumer. Despite this, consumers are still moderately comfortable with the IMC function that is provided, even while noting that improvements are required.

The second aim was to address whether a gap or disconnect existed between best practice methods and the IMC service delivered by Australian SSOs. Best practice strategies and activities should maximise the utility of the IMC function and lead to high to very high levels (6-7 rating) of consumer perceptions of this service. There were no aspects of the IMC function delivered by Australian SSOs that achieved these results, which does indicate some disconnect between the service provided and best practice methods. These results suggest that SSOs need to continue to build on the IMC practice to continue to improve the service and offering provided to consumers. This may require consideration beyond a simple information driven website presence and social media tools limited to Twitter and Facebook. Inclusion and provision of additional, more sophisticated web services connected with ecommerce, streaming and database marketing, would likely enhance the service and experience provided
by the SSOs to consumers. Again, limitations associated with resources and staffing (numbers and knowledge/expertise) may play an integral part in this not occurring.

8.3.3. Relationship Between Consumer Perceptions of IMC and Relationship Quality (RQ3)

The relationship between consumer perceptions and IMC relationship quality was represented by Hypotheses 3-5. These tested Research Question 3, which was concerned with identifying the relationship between consumer perceptions and relationship quality. This question was stated in two parts as: *Is service quality directly linked to consumer relationship quality with Tier Two Australian SSOs? Do other factors (inhibitors, facilitators, mediators) exist, and if so, what is the impact they have on service quality?*

As above, to aid in answering this question a number of hypotheses were derived from the conceptual framework first referred to in Chapter Seven and illustrated in Figure 7.4. Figure 7.4 indicated that the hypotheses developed to address RQ3 were all supported, providing empirical evidence of the relationship between consumer perceptions and relationship quality. These relationships are shown for functional benefits and relationship quality, experiential benefits and relationship quality, functional benefits and satisfaction, experiential benefits and satisfaction, and relationship quality and satisfaction. R-squared testing showed a positive effect of functional benefits on satisfaction which accounted for 27% of the variance recorded for the satisfaction construct, while experiential benefit accounted for 13% of the variance observed for satisfaction. Satisfaction was also shown to have a positive effect on relationship quality, being responsible for 32% of variance.

Findings from this investigation show that service quality elements measured by consumer perceptions of functional and experiential benefits have a significant, positive, and direct effect on relationship quality. The satisfaction construct was also shown to have a positive, significant, and direct effect on relationship quality of the IMC delivered by
Australian SSOs. This supports exiting literature that suggests satisfaction is a higher order latent construct which takes consumer perceptions of perceived quality and consumer experiences into consideration, to create a construct drawing on these to assist in the forecasting of relationship quality and behavioural intentions (Belch & Belch, 2015; Park & Kim, 2000). Practically, this suggests that the direct effect of experiential and functional benefits on relationship quality is amplified by a positive, significant relationship between satisfaction and relationship quality. As relationship quality was shown to be a driver of behavioural intentions, strengthening the relationship between consumer perceptions and relationship quality should increase the likelihood of positive behavioural intentions.

Although outside of the scope of this thesis, mediators and inhibitors of consumer satisfaction were suggested by existing literature to have an impact. Factors effecting satisfaction including family history, location, peer and social factors and financial factors can have mediating and inhibiting effects on both participation in sporting activities and also perceived satisfaction of services provided by sport bodies including IMC messaging. These mediators and inhibitors were noted in the conceptual framework, but not addressed directly for the purpose of empirical testing. This information was not generated in the course of this project and is noted for the possible future research opportunity it presents.

8.3.4. Influence of, and Relationship between Behavioural Attitudes and Relationship Quality (RQ4)

Research Question 4 tested the effects of relationship quality and satisfaction on consumers’ behavioural intentions. Behavioural intentions leading to increased revenue, perception, participation, and awareness were tested and found to have strong positive correlations to the behavioural intention construct. Relationship quality and satisfaction were shown to have significant, positive, and direct influences on the behavioural intention
construct. Findings showed relationship quality accounting for 28% of the variance observed (R-squared testing) for the behavioural intention construct, while satisfaction accounted for a smaller but still positive, significant, and direct influence of 12% from R-squared testing techniques. These results indicate that relationship quality influences behavioural intention by accounting for above a quarter of the strength of the effect between the consumer perceptions and behavioural intentions. Without the influence of relationship quality of behavioural intentions it can be suggested that likelihood of positive functional outcomes derived from consumer perceptions decreases by one quarter. Satisfaction and behavioural intention is also important, with satisfaction accounting for 12% of the variance of the relationship strength between consumer perceptions and behavioural intentions. Again, this can be suggested to decrease the likelihood of positive consumer intentions based on their perceptions of service quality alone by 12%. The effect of satisfaction and relationship quality on behavioural intentions is therefore crucial to Australian SSOs aiming to maximise the effectiveness of the IMC function to obtain scarce and sought-after resources.

8.3.5. Behavioural Intentions of Consumers as Predicted Through the Conceptual Framework (RQ5)

Research Question 5 asked; what functional organisational outcomes result for Tier Two Australia SSOs through these consumer behaviours? Service quality was shown to impact relationship quality and satisfaction, which have a significant positive direct influence on behavioural intentions ($r^2 = 28\%$ for relationship quality and 12\% for satisfaction). These intentions are linked in existing literature (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000) to organisational outcomes, such as increasing attendance, increasing participation, and enhancing public perception of the sport.
The results achieved from this research are supported by those within the literature. Strong positive correlations between the behavioural intention construct and desired organisational goals were identified. These goals, including increasing revenue, enhancing public perception, and increasing participation and awareness of the sporting organisation, returned correlations ranging from 0.71 through to 0.94. These very high correlations support the suggestion that, for behavioural intentions, the intentions of consumers can be predicted through application of consumer perception data to the conceptual framework.

These results impact in both a practical and theoretical way. Practically, organisations can identify which functional outcomes they require from awareness, revenue, perception and participation, and refer to the conceptual framework to uncover which elements from experiential and function benefits that their IMC services need to refine and improve on. This can allow a sport organisation with for example, low awareness, to refer to the framework and identify that the information and design sub-dimensions of functional benefits need improving. From this, the scale items defining the elements can be reviewed, and IMC messaging tailored to increase consumer perceptions of these items. Theoretically, relations between the constructs are in line with previous research in sport, providing a reliable tool for further investigation in this area.

8.3.6. Identification of Gaps/Disconnects Between Consumer Expectations and Organisation IMC Functions, and IMC Function and Best Practice

This project was concerned with the identification of gaps or disconnects between consumer expectations and IMC functions, including organisation attitudes, best practice methods and actual services delivered. Attitudes of the SSO respondents were in line with consumer perceptions of the IMC function delivered. The importance of IMC, the goals and utility of the function, and the quality of the service provided by Australian sport bodies were
investigated. Attitudes and perception of the SSOs and consumers were similar, with both acknowledging the importance of the function, identifying similar goals and objectives of IMC. Both groups also recognised that the quality of the IMC delivered needs improvement across a range of elements of the function.

The second component of this research aim sought to identify whether a gap or disconnect existed between the IMC service provided by Australian sport organisations and best practice (Shaltoni & West, 2010). A disconnect was identified, with both data from organisation interviews and consumer surveys, highlighting a gap between the actual IMC delivered, and the suggested function. Interview data identified a shortfall in philosophy, activities, desired outcomes, and overall sophistication when compared to the suggested best practice framework suggested by Shaltoni and West (2010). In addition, consumer perception ratings for the psychometric survey data returned mean values of 4-5 suggesting a moderate to average consumer perception of these IMC elements and service quality. Best practice implementation of IMC should ideally return high to very-high consumer perceptions of 6-7 on psychometric testing. This difference, in actual perceptions and suggested best practice perceptions, highlights that a gap or disconnect exists between the actual IMC service delivered by Australian sport organisations and suggested best practice.

8.4. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the findings outlined, several practical implications can be surmised for managers of not for profit SSOs. These implications may also extend to not for profit sport organisations globally and possibly other not for profit bodies in other industries including health and education. The overarching research aims of this study were to conceptualise a framework for use as a practical tool in refining and maximising the effectiveness of the
strategic IMC function in Australian Tier Two SSOs. In addition, a practical outcome was to employ this framework to identify any gaps or disconnects between the IMC function and consumer perceptions of its quality. As a result, relationships between constructs involved in defining the IMC function were tested and measured, and the utility of the IMC function in providing positive organisational outcomes was identified.

Results indicate that IMC is an important dimension of sport organisation performance creating opportunities for increased positive consumer behaviours, and should attract the required resources to be adopted and implemented effectively and efficiently.

However, staff members of the participating organisations highlighted a lack of resources being applied to IMC use. This suggests a disconnect between the IMC function delivered and best practice strategies, as suggested by literature (Shaltoni & West, 2010). The practical implication of this for SSOs, would be to suggest the allocation of additional resources be directed to IMC to achieve a number of desired positive outcomes, supported by this research. However, findings show that the existing IMC strategies are ad hoc and reactive, with little or no evaluation systems in place, leading to ineffective and inefficient use of IMC. This decreases the utility of IMC as a tool in achieving the desired goals, and suggests that structured activities based on integrated IMC strategies need to be adopted to fully leverage the IMC function.

A further practical implication to emerge from this research is the exploration of sport IMC consumers, and the variances in perceptions they have to the IMC services delivered. These consumers segmented by demographics and user group characteristics, can provide information to allow a more specific, targeted approach to delivering IMC messages to consumers.
The conceptual framework developed measures the relationships between constructs including; relationship quality and behavioural intentions; satisfaction and behavioural intentions; functional benefits and experiential benefits and; relationship quality and satisfaction. This empirical view of the function, provides practitioners with a tool to identify and address shortfalls in the IMC delivered by them. For example, functional benefits were shown to have more of an effect on relationship quality than experiential benefits. If an organisation finds it needs to increase its perceived relationship quality, then IMC delivered to consumers need to focus on and enhance the functional benefits. In practical terms the framework developed can both guide strategy by showing the relationships between the constructs and their importance in obtaining desired functional outcomes.

Operationally, SSOs can refer to the framework as a resource to assist tailoring strategy, activities and messages to achieve desired functional outcomes, with these outcomes being shown to be directly influenced by relationship quality and satisfaction. To increase the possibility of achieving the functional outcomes resulting from behavioural intentions, relationship quality and satisfaction need to be maximised. An example of this could be an organisation identifying the strength of the relationship between functional benefits and relationship quality needs improving. By testing the sub-dimensions of the functional benefits construct they may find the information scale has weak factor loadings compared with the other scales. By checking the scale items for Information the organisations can identify which elements of the information delivered to their consumers’ needs to be improved in the IMC they deliver.

In summary, the range of practical implications listed above, provide opportunities for sporting bodies to refine the IMC services delivered to consumers, to maximise the positive benefits provided by this important organisational function.
8.5. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

A range of theoretical contributions arising from this research can be made to relationship marketing, not for profit sports, and the IMC function. This is especially relevant given the scarcity of empirical investigations into the IMC function from a sporting context. The unique characteristics of sport and services provide a difficulty in conceptualising the IMC function and the constructs and scale items utilised to develop it (Berry, 1985; Gronroos, 1982; Gronroos 1994; Kim & Trail, 2011; Palmatier et al., 2006). As such, this thesis contributes to existing knowledge by exploring IMC, not for profit sports, and the utility of IMC in providing sports organisations with a tool to obtain scarce resources. It also applies findings from existing studies in similar and relevant contexts (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), and shows the applicability of the scale items and constructs developed for use in a not for profit sport context. Therefore, this research adds to the understanding of what the IMC function is, what constructs define and conceptualise it, and what the relationships are between these constructs.

Primary contributions to theory from this research, is the exploration of and confirmation of relationships between; experiential and functional benefits and relationship quality; experiential and functional benefits and satisfaction and; relationship quality and satisfaction and behavioural intentions. While there have been previous studies that have shown relationships between pairs of these constructs (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Hollebeek, 2011; Kim & Trail, 2011; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Palmatier et al., 2006), a lack of literature exists exploring the whole IMC function from functional and experiential benefits through to behavioural intentions. In addition, in presenting elements of the IMC function in contrast to the complete function, previous research only presented these relationships in a linear manner. A major contribution of this research is conceptualising a non-linear framework where all relationships are measured concurrently. As such, empirical support is
provided to extend existing knowledge of relationships between pairs of constructs. This approach adds empirical knowledge to the entire IMC function, from inputs to outputs, as delivered by Australian sport organisations, and builds on the need in sport consumer behaviour research for work that moves beyond cross sectional, single organisation studies, through using data from multiple cases or organisations, in this case via data collected from multiple different SSOs (Funk, Lock, Karg & Pritchard, 2016).

Variances between consumer perceptions of survey respondents were also identified. Demographic and user group characteristics allow the creation of sport IMC consumer typologies with variations between ages, internet use levels and sport participation levels apparent. These findings allow an in-depth investigation of sport IMC consumers, where the variances in perceptions can be explored further. The contribution of this research towards further exploration of typologies, supports the refinement of definitions of IMC and consumers of sport IMC. This extends to the development of measurement tools, including scale items and a conceptual framework suitable for use in further studies in this area.

Chapter One introduced a range of theoretical models, including systems theory and the technological adoption model. Implications of the findings of this research based on these theories are supported. Systems theory, as suggested by Chelladurai (1987), provides a framework based on inputs, leading to throughputs, then leading to outputs. Systems theory was widely supported in the literature with Pfeffer (1977), Steers (1977) and Winand et al. (2016), suggesting that it presents as a suitable model to represent organisation performance and operations. A multiple constituents approach to this model was suggested by the above authors. The findings of this research support the use of a multiple constituents approach to a systems model of performance being applied for use in studying the IMC function and other service elements of Australian sport bodies. This contributes to existing knowledge by showing the suitability of this approach towards exploring and measuring for both sport and
not for profit organisations. Often, the characteristics of these organisations can make measuring performance difficult (Bayle & Madella 2002, Winand et al., 2010).

The technological adoption model defined by Davis et al. (1989), which evolved into the integrated communication technology adoption (ICTA) model (Lin, 2003), attempts to forecast consumer intentions based on perceived attitudes towards factors including ease of use, fulfilment, and usefulness. The current research used existing models from similar contexts (Hur, Ko & Valacich, 2011; Kim & Trail, 2011; Park & Kim, 2000), which incorporated elements of the ICTA model in their findings and conceptual models. Therefore, findings and implications from this research should be related to the theoretical base in the ICTA. The ICTA considers a number of technological and social factors to predict consumer attitudes and behaviours, specifically internet use. The current research supports the ICTA proposed by Lin et al. (2007), with its findings of system factors, technology factors, audience factors and adoption factors displaying relationships between each other. As such, the current research not only supports the utility of the ICTA and its principles in a not for profit and sport setting, it adds to the elements suitable for inclusion in the ICTA, allowing further research to be developed using this model.

8.6 METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The mixed method case study approach applied to this research, added to the lack of existing academic research in not for profit sport in Australia from both a qualitative and quantitative methodological perspective. A range of issues were explored concerning the IMC function delivered to consumers, in order to test and measure relationships within this function. In addition, the conceptual framework developed, provides the first complete representation of the IMC function as delivered to not for profit sport bodies. These dual aims
show the appropriateness of a mixed methods approach where first, qualitative interviews were employed to obtain in depth data on a number of complex issues regarding attitudes of organisations towards IMC. Secondly, quantitative surveys were employed to provide data on consumer perceptions of the IMC delivered. The depth of the data gained from both the interviews and the surveys provided new insights into this area, improving and adding to the theory, and allowing further improvements through providing a conceptual framework. This aligns with Funk et al. (2016), who recognised the need for additional research in sport consumer behaviour that moves beyond single organisation cross section research, into multi-organisation data sets being investigated.

The qualitative method used was a case study approach which allowed an exploration of the central themes and issues, while building rich data to assist in the confirmatory component of the investigation carried out using quantitative methods. Another methodological consideration in the qualitative element was triangulation of the data obtained. Stake (2013) suggests the importance of data triangulation in increasing the strength of the findings and, as such, the qualitative elements were examined from many perspectives. These perspectives included a number of participants interviewed, and drew on several sources of information. The data obtained from interviews with the staff members provided an in-depth understanding of the issues investigated.

Qualitative components provided an exploratory view of the research issues, and to build on these findings, a confirmatory process including quantitative data analysis was undertaken. Scale items and constructs were derived from existing literature, with the reliability and validity of these determined using co-efficient alpha, composite reliability, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory analysis, and correlation analysis techniques. From this, the scale items and constructs were shown to be both reliable and valid, and tested psychometrically. The development of these scale items and constructs add to existing
knowledge by providing proven measurement tools for the IMC function in sport organisations. Furthermore, development and testing of the conceptual framework adds to this knowledge, allowing the relationships involved between the developed constructs to be tested and measured. These relations showed the importance of the constructs functional benefits, experiential benefits, relationship quality, satisfaction, and relationship quality in facilitating positive behavioural intentions. Understanding the constructs and the relationships between the constructs allows further exploration of these central themes and application of them in a marketing paradigm to occur.

8.7. LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

Delimitations of this investigation were listed and discussed in Chapter One. These included the scope of the investigation focusing not only on Australian sporting organisations, but also Tier Two Australian state sporting organisations. Although the cases used for this study represent a small sector of the sporting landscape, they possess a well-defined set of characteristics, supporting applicability of the method, framework and results towards other sports and other contexts. The characteristics of the Australian sport system and state sporting organisations are potentially transferable across nations and other sporting bodies, allowing generalisability of the data and applicability to a number of sport organisations and not for profit organisations who identify the importance of IMC in providing positive functional benefits.

Given the mixed methods nature of this research, the qualitative process involved only a small number of staff being interviewed to obtain organisational attitudes towards IMC. These attitudes may not be reflective of the whole organisations attitudes. The interviewees were employed in specific marketing and IMC roles providing them with the
appropriate knowledge of the IMC function as delivered by their sporting body. Although only a small sample of staff were involved, the in-depth nature of the interviews ensured the key issues identified within the literature could be explored. Further qualitative work would add to the external validity, the depth of information obtained and its capability to enhance existing knowledge in the area justifies both its inclusion and the depth of investigation carried out.

**8.8. FUTURE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES**

Due to the generalisability of this thesis, a number of future research opportunities emerge. The research focused on Australian Tier Two SSOs, which represent only a small segment of the sporting landscape. While these sports were chosen as cases for this study based on characteristics, including the capability to adopt and implement IMC and the desire to achieve positive benefits provided by effective and efficient IMC delivery, the benefits of this are not exclusive to this sub-group of sport organisations. Other tiers of Australian not for profit sports can be investigated, as well as corporate sports in Australia, given that the sport marketing principles this investigation and the framework are based on are transferable across the spectrum of sporting organisations.

Extending the qualitative aspects of the research could involve all staff members within the SSO. As IMC and digital technology become ubiquitous and impossible to ignore for organisational purposes, a consistent attitude and philosophy towards IMC within an organisation will ensure more effective and efficient use of this tool. By comparing staff responses towards IMC within an organisation, factors leading to differences in attitudes can be identified, providing an opportunity to address these differences in a practical sense, adding to the body of knowledge in this area. This opportunity could be transferred to a
comparison of staff attitudes across sport organisations, sport organisation types, and countries of origin of sport bodies, to identify and address any variances in philosophy and attitudes.

Further research can also focus on new and developing IMC platforms and tools. Constant evolution of these platforms presents an opportunity to investigate the use of new platforms as they are adopted and implemented by sport organisations. The literature review noted technologies such as Virtual Reality and sharing platforms such as Snapchat have not been investigated or measured in a not for profit sporting context. As this occurs an extension of this study to account for these platforms should be undertaken to provide a full representation of IMC delivery.

The scale items, constructs and conceptual framework, developed, tested and measured consumer perceptions of IMC delivered by sports organisations to the market (members and participants). The market or consumers were segmented into many user groups based on a range of characteristics. These user groups displayed variances in the perceptions of the IMC service delivered, allowing further investigation into the factors leading to these differences. Age of respondents, internet use, and sports participation levels were some of the segments to display significant variances regarding perceptions of IMC. Further investigation into the factors resulting in these differences could lead to useful practical implications in tailoring messages to reach these group more effectively. Future work in the shape of linking these contextual factors and testing them through multi-group frameworks or analysis methods would also provide novel and useful findings in the sport consumer behaviour field.

The IMC function delivered by sport organisations formed the focus of this research, however, as the study tools, scale items, constructs and framework were based on generic marketing principles derived from relationship marketing and service dominant logic.
marketing, these tools could be adapted and applied to a number of service based operations in a sports setting. Coaching clinics, sporting events, sporting leagues and clubs can all have their quality tested and measured through the principles employed in this thesis.

In addition, the framework developed, and the scale items framing the qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys, can be applied to, and tested, in a range of non-sporting organisations. The theories forming the foundation of this research were general marketing principles based on a service dominant logic and relationship marketing ideals. As a number of industries and contexts find advantage with service dominant logic and relationship marketing strategies, including hospitality and tourism, education, and health and charitable organisations, the relationships between constructs identified here can provide a guideline for investigation of the IMC function deployed in these contexts.

These future research opportunities focused on the application of the conceptual framework developed. To construct this framework, an overall performance model in the form of a systems process model was chosen, and a range of constructs were defined and operationalised. Extensions could include in-depth testing of the constructs; experiential benefits, functional benefits, satisfaction, relationship quality, and behavioural intentions, both individually and between chosen constructs.

8.9. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This thesis used a mixed-methods approach based on a qualitative interview process and quantitative measurement of constructs, relationships and the development of a conceptual framework to examine the effects of IMC on Australian sport organisations. The aim was to determine whether a gap or disconnect exists between organisational attitudes and
consumer perceptions of the IMC delivered, and whether a gap or disconnect existed between
the IMC function delivered and best practice.

Prior to this research, in a not for profit sport setting, little knowledge on the
constructs that define the IMC function existed. The results provided an accurate
representation of the function, and relationships within the IMC function. In addition,
consumer and organisational attitudes towards this function had not been investigated or
compared and contrasted. The IMC function delivered by Australian SSOs had not been
compared to best practice methods to test the effectiveness and efficiency of strategies and
activities employed.

A non-linear representation of the IMC function was tested and shown to be an
accurate representation of the service delivered by Australian SSOs. This framework
involved five constructs, experiential benefit, functional benefit, satisfaction, relationship
quality, and behavioural intentions. Relationships between these constructs were measured
providing organisations with a framework to refine and improve IMC strategies and activities
based on the findings. Existing literature could not identify whether the attitudes of the
organisations providing IMC was in line with the consumer perceptions of the service or if
there was a gap or disconnect. While this research could not confirm a gap or disconnect
between organisational attitudes and consumer perceptions of IMC services delivered to
members and participants of the SSOs, organisations recognised the importance of IMC,
expressed frustration at a lack of resources preventing them maximising the effectiveness of
their function, and admitted there are many elements of the function that require
improvement. In line with this, consumer perceptions of the IMC function returned above-
average to moderate ratings across all elements measured showing they also recognise the
importance of IMC and the need for improvement in the quality of IMC delivered.
The overarching research aim asked whether the IMC function provided by Australian SSOs was in line with best practice methods suggested by literature. Here, a disconnect was identified between the IMC function investigated and best practice methods. Shaltoni and West (2010) describe an EMO framework providing a guideline for maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of IMC as a service. Variances were identified between this suggested framework and data obtained from the SSOs investigated. Differences in philosophy and strategies were identified alongside variations in tools used and desired outcomes. This difference was supported by the low ratings returned from the consumer perception surveys. Best practice IMC suggests ratings of 6 or 7 need to be achieved for the consumer perceptions, however, measurements of these falling between 4 and 5 suggest a disconnect between the IMC function studied and best practice methods. This research provided a conceptual framework to enable organisations to refine their IMC function to minimise the differences between best practice and current operations and also to provide a foundation for further study in this area.

In conclusion, this thesis identified the importance of IMC towards the successful operation of Australian sport bodies, and the fact that this tool is not being leveraged to its full potential. A disconnect between the function delivered and best practice was identified, with a conceptual framework developed showing relationships between constructs within the IMC function. These relationships allow a refinement of practical strategies employed by organisations, alongside providing a foundation for further study in a context where little literature and previous research exists.


Bateson, J.E. (1979). *Why we need services marketing*. Division of Research, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University.


Fornell, C., & Larcker, D.F. (1981). Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*, 382-388.


Liu, Y., & Shrum, L.J. (2002). What is interactivity and is it always such a good thing? Implications of definition, person, and situation for the influence of interactivity on advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising, 31*(4), 53-64.


APPENDIX A

Scale Items Removed By Panel Through Pilot Study: Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item Removed</th>
<th>Reason For Removal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue: I am willing to try the product/service of this firm</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item overlaps with item Participation 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment: I am devoted to the team name</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment: I defend the team name in front of friends</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust: The team really takes care of my needs as a member</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information: On (#brand)’s FB page, there are good features that help me accomplish my tasks</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item does not define construct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction: Overall, I enjoy browsing and/or participating in the organisation’s website and IMC activities</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item overlaps with item Satisfaction 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty: The organisation is concerned with keeping members</td>
<td>Not used, panel determined item does not define construct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scale Items Removed By Panel Through Pilot Study: After Student Pilot Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item Removed</th>
<th>Reason For Removal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment: I feel involved with the organisation</td>
<td>Not used, identified as outlier in pilot survey. Students did not understand item in current context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction: The social aspects of the organisation’s website and IMC are important to me</td>
<td>Not used, identified as outlier in pilot survey. Students did not understand item in current context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction: On the organisation’s website and IMC tools I get to know other people who share interests</td>
<td>Not used, identified as outlier in pilot survey. Students did not understand item in current context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A

Initial Linear Framework and Goodness of Fit Using Pilot Study To Determine Suitability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>$x^2$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>P value</th>
<th>Cmin/df</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>NFI</th>
<th>CFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>781.78</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.420</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>.961</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.981</td>
<td>.988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

PhD Interview Guide

Stage One – Profile and Background (5-10mins)

Introduce research, discuss confidentiality and anonymity, provide outline of interview.

Question the participant’s position, title, length of time working at organisation and current position.

Stage Two – Broad Initial Questions (10-15mins)

How important is promotion to your organisation?

What is your definition of marketing, promotion & digital based IMC?

Does your organisation engage in digital IMC?

How long has your organisation engaged in digital IMC?

Does your organisation have staff specifically for promotion?

How does the ratio of traditional promotion activities compare with digital IMC in your organisation?

What does your organisation see as an advantage of digital IMC?

What does your organisation see as a disadvantage of digital IMC?

Does your organisation have a dedicated IMC strategy?

Stage Three- IMC Activities (15–20mins)

What does your organisation identify digital IMC activities as?

What capabilities do you think SSOs require to carry out these IMC activities?

What capabilities does your organisation have to carry out IMC activities?

Who are you looking to ‘promote’ or communicate with (what specific stakeholders) – i.e. members or public etc.

Why are you targeting this section and how to you segregate it? Demographically, psychographically?

Do you tailor your IMC activities/messages to cater for different stakeholders? Players-junior, elite, recreational. Coaches, volunteers etc.

Do you involve major stakeholders-sponsors/government agencies in your IMC use?

What does your organisation wish to gain from promotion?

How would you rate your organisation’s IMC adoption level?

A) Communication-basic
B) Transaction-intermediate
C) Transformation-advanced

Does your organisation attempt to gather information from IMC activities? If so what, and how do you plan on using it?

What other sports or models did you/do you base your IMC activities/strategies on?

Do you see your commitment to digital IMC increasing in the future- 3,5,10 years?

Stage Four –IMC Measures and Organisation Effectiveness (15- 20mins)

How are the outcomes of these activities measured?

How are these measures used to assess effectiveness of IMC activities?

Has the effectiveness of IMC enhanced organisational performance?

Are there any factors preventing your IMC strategy from reaching its full potential?

Is there anything else you can think of that will add additional information to this interview?

Thank participant for time and effort, ask if they will be available for a follow up survey and enquire if they would like a summary of the study outcomes.
**APPENDIX C**

**PhD Survey Tool**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Characteristic Questions</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Under 18</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 18-25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 26-35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 36-50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 50+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation Type/s- select more than one if applicable</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Athlete</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Coach</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Official</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Volunteer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Parent</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Other, please list…………</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation Level/s- select more than one if applicable</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Junior/School</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Recreational/Social</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Semi Elite/Elite</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Masters/Senior</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Other, please list…………</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participation time per week</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>o 1-3 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 3.5-5 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 5.5-7 hours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o 7.5-9 hours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Above 9 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participation Length</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o Under 1 year</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o 1-5 years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o 6-10 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Over 10 years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly use of internet (all use)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 0-2 hours</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>o 2.5-4 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 4.5-6 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 6.5-8 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o 8.5-10 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Over 10 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly use of internet (sport use general)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 0-2 hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Weekly use of internet (sport use, specific to this organisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5-6 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5-8 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5-10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What do you use your sport organisation’s website and IMC tools for? Select all applicable choices.**

- Information - fixtures, results, news
- Education - rules, coaching, officiating, instruction
- Entertainment - broadcasts, highlights, interviews, games
- Interaction - conversation, blogs, forums.

**Which internet tools/activities do you use and how often?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>never</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>Every day</th>
<th>More than once per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content communities (YouTube)</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website content (info)</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Likert scale 7-point attitude/behaviour/outcomes**

**Information Quality/Functional benefit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The information provided by the organisation’s website and IMC tools is valuable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o o o o o o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The information provided by THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools is useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o o o o o o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The information provided by THE ORGANISATION website and IMC is rich in detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o o o o o o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information provided by THE ORGANISATION IMC covers a wide range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o o o o o o o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interaction Quality/Experiential benefit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The social aspects of THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools are important to me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>o o o o o o o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools I get to know other people who are interested in the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the conversational interactions on THE ORGANISATION website and IMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy communicating with other members through THE ORGANISATION website and IMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browsing and/or participating in THE ORGANISATION website and IMC enriches my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can learn something valuable by interacting with others through THE ORGANISATION IMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can count on THE ORGANISATION IMC staff to be friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ORGANISATION web managers recognise and deal with my special needs promptly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Design Quality – service quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It is easy to navigate around and find what I need on THE ORGANISATION IMC tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The layout and format of THE ORGANISATION IMC tools are attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ORGANISATION IMC tools are visually appealing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**E-satisfaction- service quality**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools are error free</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like my privacy is protected using THE ORGANISATION IMC tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I trust THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools will not misuse my personal information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would rate using THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools favourably</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ORGANISATION IMC tools helped improve my knowledge of the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is fun to use THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my decision to use THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on my experience with THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools, I feel very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I did the right thing in using THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Loyalty**

THE ORGANISATION website and IMC activities make an effort to increase customer's loyalty

THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools make various efforts to improve its ties with members

THE ORGANISATION is concerned with keeping members

I always continue to favour the offerings of THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools before others in the sport

I always choose to use THE ORGANISATION website and IMC in preference to other sources in the sport

**Reciprocity**

THE ORGANISATION pays attention to what I get relative to what I give them

THE ORGANISATION constantly returns the favour when I do something good for them

THE ORGANISATION would notice if I did something that benefitted the organisation

**Trust**

I trust THE ORGANISATION completely

I can count on THE ORGANISATION

THE ORGANISATION has integrity

THE ORGANISATION is reliable
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>I feel involved with THE ORGANISATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be a member of THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am committed to THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am devoted to THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am dedicated to THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td>I am very familiar with the THE ORGANISATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about the THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about the services provided by the THE ORGANISATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot about the sport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intentions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>I have recommended THE ORGANISATION website and IMC activities to lots of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ‘talk up’ THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools to my friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to spread the good word about THE ORGANISATION website and IMC activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I give THE ORGANISATION website and IMC tools lots of positive word of mouth advertising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>I will track the news of the sport through the media (trad and digital)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will watch or listen to the sport through the media (trad and digital)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will support the sport by watching or listening to games through the media (trad and digital)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

349
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I will seek out activities/programs provided by the THE ORGANISATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I intend to try out activities/programs provided by the THE ORGANISATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I intend to attend/participate in the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The likelihood that I will attend/participate in the sport in the future is high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will attend/participate in the sport in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am willing to purchase the services/products of the THE ORGANISATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the future, I intend to purchase services/merchandise/membership fees of the sport.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

State Sport Organisation Information/Recruitment Letter.

Xx September 2015

Dear,

Re: Research Project: Exploring Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) In The Australian Sporting System.

My name is Damien Whitburn and I am currently completing a Doctor of Philosophy at Deakin University. Over the next six months I am undertaking a study of IMC in the Australian sporting system as part of the requirements of the PhD course at Deakin University. This is an invitation to you to participate in a study which investigates the effectiveness and efficiency of IMC strategies employed in Australian National Sports Organisations (SSOs) and/or State Sporting Organisations (SSOs).

The purpose of the study develops a conceptual framework representing IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs, and to identify the strategies and activities that these organisations can employ in regards improving their IMC activities. This will enable the development of a research framework describing the use of IMC. Your organisation has been approached to take part in this study as your status as an Australian SSO/SSO dictates information provided can be meaningful and valuable to this study.

Participation in the study will be via an interview lasting between thirty to sixty minutes to identify the behaviours and attitudes of your organisation towards IMC and an anonymous online survey sent to members of your organisation. The person interviewed should have a background in marketing and IMC, IMC strategies and be familiar with the activities of the organisation, and be available to participate in an interview from September to October. The online survey will be of a multiple choice layout with a predicted completion time of 15-30mins and all data collected will be treated confidentially. Any available reports or documents from the organisation may be requested to assist with further information for the study.

Participation in this study will benefit your organisation as you will receive a copy of the summary of the research report (or a complete copy of the full research study and thesis on request). The report will provide knowledge on the use of IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs and provide a framework for the use of IMC, which your organisation may find can assist you further in increasing your organisation’s performance.

It is understood that privacy issues are noted as being of concern. As part of the study the identification of all participants and organisations within the study will remain confidential and at all times, including the de-identification of interview data prior to analysis and coding. The findings may be used in conference and journal publications, but in all cases, no individuals or organisations will be able to be identified. Participation in this research is voluntary and all parties are free to discontinue at any time with no explanation or justification needed. Any information collected from you will be destroyed if you wish to discontinue involvement in this study.
This research project has been granted approval from the Faculty of Business and Law Higher Research and Degrees and Ethics Committee and the Human Research Committee of Deakin University.

This next stage is to gather interest in participation, which can be done by return email. I will be in touch to follow up in a week as well. Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to hearing from you about your involvement in the study.

Yours sincerely,

Damien Whitburn
Exploring Integrated Marketing Communication Gaps (IMC) in the Australian Sporting System.

Thank you for expressing interest in volunteering to take part in this study. The following information is presented in order to enable you to make an informed decision as to whether you wish to participate in this study.

You have been provided with an information letter explaining the research study. It is expected that you have read and understood the information letter, if not please contact either the researcher or Supervisor for clarification on any issue. At any time during the research please feel free to contact the research team should you have any further questions.

Your participation in this study involves:

- Participation in an interview at your place of business or a neutral location lasting between thirty to sixty minutes. This interview is expected to take place between August and October.
- Any documents that may assist the research e.g. Annual reports, financial statements.

All information in this research will be confidential at all times and the identity of participants will not be disclosed without consent. The information provided is to be used only for the purpose of this research to explore IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs. Any participant involved in the project is free to withdraw from participation at any time, without explanation or penalty and all information collected will be destroyed if you wish to discontinue.

I ________________ (the participant) of ________________ (organisation) have read the information provided with this consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the activities associated with this research and understand that I can withdraw consent at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered in this study may be published providing myself, the SSO/SSO, and staff members are not identified in any way.

Signed: __________________________    Date: ____________________________

For further information please contact the Researcher:

The Researcher
Damien Whitburn
Deakin University
Doctor of Philosophy Candidate
Phone 0475 425 323
Email: djw@deakin.edu.au
Exploring Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in the Australian Sporting System.

Thank you for expressing interest in volunteering to take part in this study. The following information is presented in order to enable you to make an informed decision as to whether your organisation wishes to participate in this study.

You have been provided with an information letter explaining the research study. It is expected that you have read and understood the information letter, if not please contact either the researcher or Supervisor for clarification on any issue. At any time during the research please feel free to contact the research team should you have any further questions.

Your participation in this study involves:

- Distribution of an online survey (through providing the hyper link) to your organisation’s members. This survey consists of 60-80 items and completion time should be between fifteen to thirty minutes. This survey is expected be online for completion between August and October.
- Any documents that may assist the research e.g. Annual reports, financial statements.

All information in this research will be confidential at all times and the identity of participants will not be disclosed without consent. The information provided is to be used only for the purpose of this research to explore IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs. Any participant involved in the project is free to withdraw from participation at any time, without explanation or penalty and all information collected will be destroyed if you wish to discontinue.

I __________________ (the participant) of ____________ (organisation) have read the information provided with this consent form and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the activities associated with this research and understand that I can withdraw consent at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered in this study may be published providing myself, the SSO/SSO, and staff members are not identified in any way.

Signed: __________________________    Date: ____________________________

For further information please contact the Researcher:

The Researcher
Damien Whitburn
Deakin University
Doctor of Philosophy Candidate

Phone 0475 425 323
Email: djw@deakin.edu.au
DEAKIN UNIVERSITY PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Plain Language Statement

Date: xx September 2015

Full Project Title: Exploring Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in the Australian Sport System.

Principal Researcher: Dr. Adam Karg, Deakin University
Associate Researcher: Dr. Paul Turner, Deakin University
Student Researcher: Damien Whitburn, Deakin University

1. Your Consent

You are invited to take part in this research project. The research aims to explore the use of IMC in the non-profit Australian sporting system including National Sport Organisations (SSOs) and State Sport Organisations (SSOs). While there some knowledge on IMC activities in general business little research has been undertaken in the context of sporting organisations and specifically SSO/SSOs. It is hoped that through conducting this research a conceptual framework will be developed and tested tasked with improving the effectiveness and efficiency of IMC activities employed in Australian SSO/SSOs. This will facilitate further research, assessing practical approaches and improvements to SSO strategy, and provide guidance to the education of sports managers working in SSO/SSOs and within IMC.

The Plain Language Statement contains detailed information about the research project. Its purpose is to explain to you as openly and clearly as possible all the procedures involved in this project so that you can make a fully informed decision whether you are going to participate.

2. Purpose and Background

The purpose of this project is to explore the use of IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs and specifically to develop a conceptual framework to facilitate more effective and efficient use of IMC within the Australian sporting system. The project and final thesis is a major and essential component of the researcher’s Doctor of Philosophy study.

Due to its emergent role within sport organisations there is very little knowledge about the use of IMC in SSO/SSOs, with practice outpacing theory in this area. A framework of the nature of this study aiming to describe and analyse the complete IMC organisational approach has yet to be developed. As such, the study of this process in Australian SSO/SSOs seeks to understand the role and importance of IMC tools and activities and to develop and test a framework of IMC use in Australian SSO/SSOs.

As an employee of a National Sporting Organisation (SSO) or State Sporting Organisation (SSO), the unit of investigation for this study, you are invited to participate in this research project. Your participation will ensure that relevant, expert views are collected in regards to the use of IMC in Australian SSO/SSOs.
3. Procedures

Participation in this project means you are either an employee or board member of an Australian National Sporting Organisation or State Sporting Organisation.

For the purpose of this project an Australian National Sporting Organisation is defined as: a national governing body of a particular sport in the country of Australia and State Sporting Organisation is defined as: a state governing body of a particular sport in the country of Australia.

Commitment to and participation in the project will involve the following for the organisation: collection of relevant available documentation (e.g. annual reports, strategic plans), in-depth interviews with managers and operational staff involved in IMC in the organisation, an online survey sent to members, and a potential follow up interview to summarise and compare results.

All interviews will last for between thirty and sixty minutes and can be conducted at the offices of the participant organisation or a neutral venue if preferred. Telephone interviews will also be conducted where necessary. With the permission of the interviewee and organisation, the interview will be recorded using a digital recording device. The interview will then be transcribed and all identifiable pieces of information (names of individuals, organisations, sports) will be recoded. Respondents will have the option to review their individual transcript prior to data analysis. Ideally, the entire collection of data for any single organisation will last no longer than a week, with the exception of the final follow up interview which may take place at a later date following the collection of data from all participant organisations. The purpose of the final follow up interview is to summarise aspects of the findings with the CEO. This is in regards to established practices within the organisation and to clarify where there may be similarities or differences compared to other organisations. No identifiable comments or views of respondents will be relayed to the CEO as part of this process.

The online survey to be sent to members is a multi-stage, multi-theme questionnaire containing between 60-80 items to be answered. The time of completion is estimated to be between 15 and 30 minutes and all data obtained through these surveys will be treated confidentially. This data will then be processed through a range of statistical tools to identify key themes such as consumer attitudes towards organisational IMC, consumer perceptions of service and relationship quality and consumer behaviour intentions.

4. Possible Benefits

The benefits of this research exist for SSO/SSOs, and non-profit organisations more broadly in developing a conceptual framework and related understanding of relevant IMC strategies and activities. This framework and knowledge can be used to facilitate the effective and efficient use of SSO resources tasked to IMC activities. This study also leads to further research, assessment of practical approaches and improvements to SSO/SSO strategy, and providing guidance to the education of sports managers working in SSO/SSOs and within IMC.

Sport and its organisations, as part of a wider system of non-profit organisations, contribute a considerable amount as an Australian industry with considerable social, economic, political and regulatory links. The role of the SSO/SSOs in the sport delivery network is vital to each of these areas, with the findings of this research likely to be applied to a wider range of sport organisations and non-profit organisations.
5. Possible Risks

This research is not controversial and thereby no foreseeable risks are seen as resulting from participating in the research. Your participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any stage without consequence.

Information collected as part of the surveys will be treated anonymously through statistical methods then reported in academic journals. Information collected through interviews will be transcribed and coded with all data treated confidentially. Your name will not be used when reporting this information. Your name will be private and confidential.

6. Privacy, Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

Any information obtained in connection with this project and that can identify you will remain confidential to the researcher Damien Whitburn and PhD supervisors. All identifiable characteristics and details will be removed prior to data analysis. It will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. If you are giving permission by signing the Consent Form, we plan to combine the findings with that of other organisations to produce de-codified and aggregated data. The results will be published in the researcher’s PhD thesis, scholarly publications, and will be presented at academic conferences.

All the information provided in interviews, surveys and documentation will be stored in a de-codified form in a secure, locked location at Deakin University for a period of 5 years, and also in a password protected digital storage. Over this period only the stated researchers will have access to the data. After this time, the data will be confidentially destroyed.

7. Results of Project

The results of the project will be subject of the researcher’s PhD Thesis as well as subsequent at peer reviewed conferences papers and peer reviewed journal publications. No participants or organisations will be able to be identified in presentation of any findings related to the research.

Participant organisations will receive, if you wish, a written summary of the final research findings and the final thesis. An oral report can also be presented to your organisation if requested. These reports will include information on the use of IMC strategies in Australian SSO/SSOs.

8. Participation is Voluntary

Participation in this research project is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. Any information obtained from you to date will not be used and will be destroyed.

Your decision whether to take part or not to take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will not affect any current or future relationship with Deakin University. Before you make your decision, a member of the research team will be available to answer any questions you have about the research project. You can ask for any information you want. Sign the Consent Form only after you have had a chance to ask your questions and have received satisfactory answers.

If you decide to withdraw from this project, please notify a member of the research team or complete and return a Revocation of Consent Form. This notice will allow the research team to inform you if there are any health risks or special requirements linked to withdrawing.
9. Ethical Guidelines

This project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) produced by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia. This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies. The ethics aspects of this research project have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Deakin University.

10. Complaints

If you have any complaints about any aspect of the project, the way it is being conducted or any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact:

The Manager
Office of Research Integrity
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, VIC 3125
Tel: 9251 7129
Email: research-ethics@deakin.edu.au

11. Reimbursement

You will not be paid for your participation in this project.

12. Further Information, Queries or Any Problems

If you require further information, wish to withdraw your participation or if you have any problems concerning this project (for example, any side effects), you can contact the researchers involved on the details below:

Mr Damien Whitburn (BCom, MBus)
Current Research Student
School of Management and Marketing
Deakin University
221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, VIC 3125
Tel: 0475 425 323
Email: djw@deakin.edu.au
APPENDIX E

Incomplete Survey Responses Removed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSO</th>
<th>SSO1</th>
<th>SSO2</th>
<th>SSO3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F

Survey Responses Removed At Each Stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SSO1</th>
<th>SSO2</th>
<th>SSO3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial Responses</td>
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<td>349</td>
<td>486</td>
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<tr>
<td>Removed Responses- Incomplete/Unfinished</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removed Responses- Missing/Careless Data</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removed Responses- Normality</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>323</td>
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## APPENDIX G

### Full Measurement Model Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ExBen</th>
<th>FunBen</th>
<th>Satis</th>
<th>RQ</th>
<th>BI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Benefit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ExBen)</td>
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<td>.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Functional Benefit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(FunBen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfaction (Satis)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Quality</td>
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<td>.52</td>
<td>.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>(RQ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intentions (BI)</td>
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<td>.32</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.44</td>
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