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The influence of communication on an effective relationship marketing strategy for sport unions in the new millennium

ABSTRACT

Relationship marketing is a paradigm shift and it is associated with the return of direct marketing both in business-to-business and business-to-consumer markets (Seth & Parvatiyar 1995). This paradigm shift in marketing focuses on acquisition and retention in building and ensuring long-term relations with clients and therefore requires the integration of proper communication principles. A long-term relationship is recognised as a very important and basic ingredient of marketing, securing and keeping customers and can be regarded as a tool for the new millennium.

Many relationship marketing definitions are provided in services marketing, industrial marketing, bank marketing, advertising and business strategy. To best understand relationship marketing Morgan and Hunt (1994) propose that "... relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges."

A good relationship is characterised by commitment and trust. According to Morgan and Hunt (1994), relationship commitment and trust is influenced by relationship termination cost, relationship benefits, shared values, communication and opportunistic behaviour. The application of a successful relationship marketing strategy in practice is therefore based on the adherence to the principles of effective communication. In future, effective communication can be regarded a major contributing factor to the marketing effectiveness of enterprises in general and sport unions as a whole. Through proper implementation of the communication principles, the relationship marketing practitioner will in the new millennium, ensure survival in a tremendously competitive environment.

The researcher attempted to make a contribution to relationship marketing research by means of an empirical study undertaken in a sport environment. The study investigated marketing effectiveness, relationship quality and needs of the clients.

This paper will provide a clear exposition of the different qualitative and quantitative methods employed and strengthened by the various procedures applied during the empirical investigation. Hypotheses were developed and the testing thereof attempted to provide important information on factors influencing the current relationship between a service provider (Sport Union) and its clients (season ticket holders).

INTRODUCTION

In the future, effective communication can be regarded a major contributing factor to the marketing effectiveness of enterprises in general and sports unions as a whole. Through proper implementation of communication principles, the relationship marketing practitioner will, in the new millennium, ensure survival in a tremendously competitive environment.

The researcher attempted to make a contribution to relationship marketing research by means of an empirical study undertaken in a sport environment. This paper will provide a clear exposition of the different qualitative and quantitative methods employed and strengthened by the various procedures followed during the empirical investigation. Hypotheses were developed and the testing thereof attempted to provide important information on factors influencing the current relationship between a service provider (Sport Union) and its stakeholder (season ticket holders).

DEFINING THE KEY CONCEPTS

To introduce relationship marketing and communication as concepts in marketing and communication practice, some definitions should be discussed.

- **Relationship marketing**

Many relationship marketing definitions are provided in services marketing, industrial marketing, bank marketing, advertising and business strategy. An understanding of relationship marketing requires a differentiation between the discrete transaction and relational exchange. To best understand relationship marketing, Morgan and Hunt (1994) propose that "... relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges."

- **Communication management / Public Relations**

Public Relations is the managed function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between the organisation and the various publics on whom its success or failure depends (Cutlipp, Center & Broom, 1985).

- **Integrated marketing communications**

According to the American Association of Advertising Agencies, integrated marketing communication is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact (Belch & Belch, 1995).

- **Stakeholders**

According to Grunig and Repper (1992), an organisation has a relationship with stakeholders when the behaviour of the organisation or of a stakeholder has consequences for the other. People are therefore stakeholders when they are affected by decisions of an organisation or if their decisions affect the organisation.

- **Image**

Most PR practitioners would gladly ban the use of the word *image*, because it often is misused and misunderstood, and because they do not like being depicted as *image makers*. *Image* describes the perception of an organisation or individual and this perception is largely based on what the organisation or individual does and says (Newsom, VanSlyke & Kruckenberg).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

The general aim of communication is to establish understanding or meaning between a communicator and a receiver (Skinner & Von Essen, 1994). More specific aims may be to persuade, to inform, to influence attitudes and to bring about action. These specific aims are related to the required outcome of the communication.

In a management context, the required outcome of communication should, as referred to in the definition, be the creation and maintenance of positive relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Cutlipp *et al*, 1994). With regard to this outcome, the principles for effective communication management should include the following (Grunig *et al*, 1992):

- The identification of the organisation's strategic stakeholders – in other words the stakeholders most likely to constrain or enhance the ability of the organisation to carry out its mission and meet its goals.
- Secondly, to build quality relationships with strategic stakeholders. These

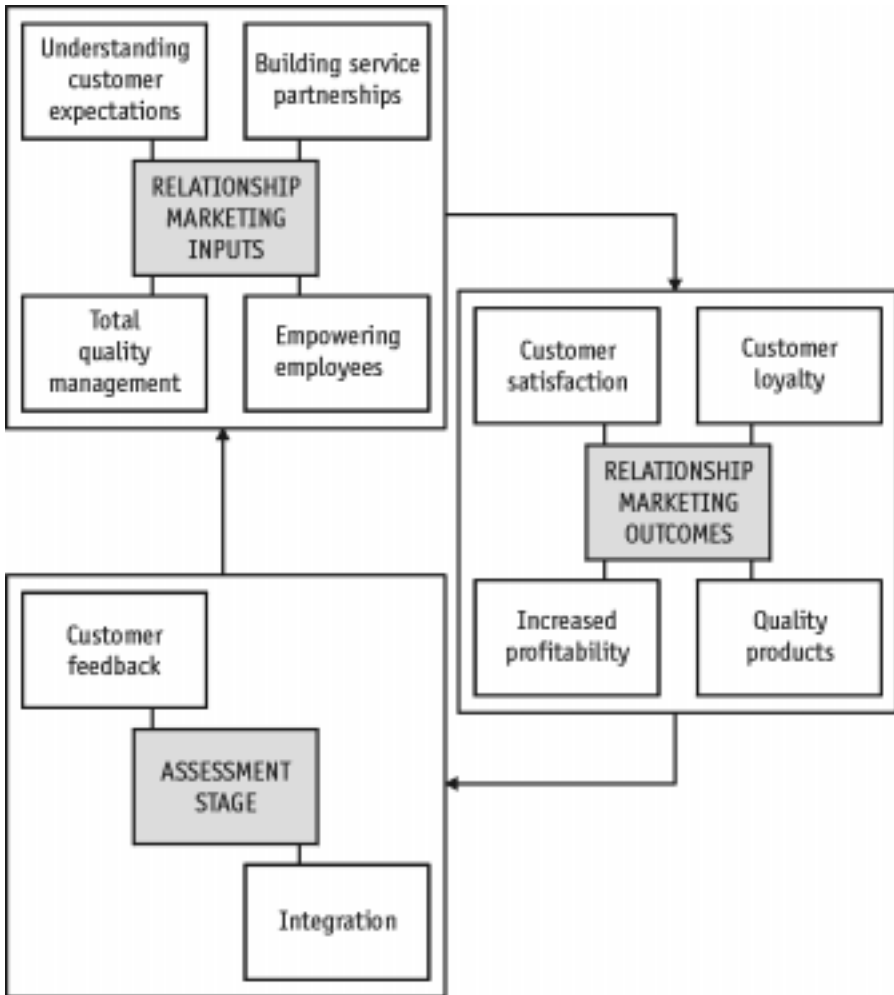
relationships (built on mutual understanding and trust) help the organisation to manage interdependencies in an ever-changing environment. The better the organisation manages its interdependencies, the more likely it is to succeed in meeting its goals.

- Thirdly, effective communication management should emphasise two-way symmetrical communication which enables the organisation to obtain valuable information about its key strategic stakeholders in its micro market and macro environments. On the basis of this intelligence, the organisation can make better decisions, formulate better strategies and finally, adapt better to its ever-changing environment.

EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP MARKETING

Relationship marketing is a continuous process, requiring a firm to solicit customer feedback, ensuring that their needs are addressed and integrating the relationship marketing process with its strategic planning framework (figure 1). A feedback system should gather, analyse and distribute information about customer needs, expectations, perceptions and assist a company to communicate with its customers on a regular basis. A more comprehensive customer feedback system is needed for relationship marketing to flourish. It should not be reliant on complaints as the key source of information.

Figure 1: Effective Relationship Marketing



Adapted from: Evens, J.R. & Laskin, R.L. 1994. The Relationship Marketing Process: A Conceptualisation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 23(5):441. December.

Relationship commitment and trust

Relationship commitment and trust can be regarded as key constructs in relationship marketing and need to be conceptualised to create an understanding of their exact meaning.

- **Relationship Commitment**

Morgan and Hunt (1994) define relationship commitment as an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is of such importance as to warrant maximum effort to maintain it. The committed party therefore believes that the relationship is worthy of development, ensuring that it endures indefinitely.

Relationship commitment is central to relationship marketing and is central in differentiating between *social* and *economical* exchange. Different exchange relationship types exist that result in social and economical exchange. Commitment is believed to be central in differentiating between *social* and *economical* exchange. Commitment is a critical factor in marriage relationships, organisational relationships and buyer behaviour relationships. The major differentiation in a marriage relationship is that mutual social trust and the resultant commitment on the part of the individual is necessary to establish and maintain an exchange relationship. Organisational commitment is one type of relationship commitment that is critical to the internal relationships of an organisation. Relationships in the services industry are built on the foundation of mutual commitment, and in consumer behaviour, brand attitude becomes central to the purchase decision in relational exchange.

A common theme emerges from the various applications of relationships. Parties identify commitment among exchange partners as key to achieving valuable outcomes for themselves and they endeavour to develop and maintain this precious attribute in their relationships. This is the main reason why Morgan and Hunt (1994) theorise that commitment is central to all relational exchanges between the organisation and its various stakeholders.

- **Trust**

Trust is believed to be central in distinguishing social from economical exchange. Trust has been studied widely in social exchange literature in organisational behaviour, communications, services marketing and industrial marketing.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) theorise that trust exists when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity. Absent from their definition of trust, is the behavioural intention of willingness. Behavioural intention is a critical facet of trust and especially on limited trust being believing that a partner is trustworthy without being willing to rely on that partner. Genuine confidence that partners can rely on one another implies the behavioural intention of reliability. If confident, one would be willing, and if not willing, then one is not genuinely confident.

The influence of trust on relationship commitment

Trust is important to relational exchange because relationships characterised by trust are so highly valued that parties desire to commit themselves to such relationships. Parties only seek for trustworthy partners because of commitment entailing a high degree of vulnerability. This causal relationship is explained by the principle of *generalised reciprocity* in social exchange theory. Therefore trust can be regarded as a major determinant of relationship commitment.

Precursors of relationship commitment and trust

Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified five major precursors of relationship commitment and trust. These precursors are relationship termination cost as relationship benefits directly influence commitment, shared values directly influence both commitment and trust ***while communication and opportunistic behaviour directly influence trust.***

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The building of long-term relationships with clients as stakeholders is determined by the quality of the actual relationship itself. Based on the importance of building relationships with stakeholders, the following research problem has been formulated:

To determine the factors influencing the relationship quality between a service provider and a strategic stakeholder.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The **primary objective** was to determine the influence of the qualitative outcomes of relationship commitment and trust on the relationship quality between a service provider and one of its stakeholders.

The **secondary objectives** of this study were:

- i. To compile a client's/stakeholder's profile, providing the service provider with valuable information for directing its marketing strategy in order to secure the effectiveness of a future relationship marketing strategy.
- ii. To identify the shortcomings of the current marketing strategy, based on the stakeholder's perception of the service provider, in order to secure the effectiveness of a future relationship marketing strategy.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The total project was divided into two distinct phases - a pavilion survey (phase 1) and a mail survey (phase 2). The pavilion survey was used as a pre-testing phase for the mail survey questionnaire.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire included specific relationship marketing questions representing the quality of the relationship between the stakeholder and the service provider, including the recommendation of the service provider to potential stakeholders.

The main body of the questionnaire included 48 individual statements divided into eight categories. The statements were measured both in terms of importance and perception of performance. Both importance and perception of performance were measured on a five-point scale.

The questionnaire lay-out was carefully planned to accommodate the mail collection methodology used, and was pre-tested during a pilot study before it was sent to the respondents in the sample.

Data collection

A probability sampling design (simple random sample) was used to draw a sample of 2000 units from the service provider's customer database (a sample frame of 3500). The sample units were randomly selected, after which the self-administered questionnaires were distributed by mail.

Data processing

Factor analysis, cross tabulation and item reliability were executed and an analysis of variance was done by means of ANOVA by using CSS Statistica computer software.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested:

- H_1 : The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) that had a long relationship with the service provider is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders that have recently engaged in a relationship with the service provider.

- H₂: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) who regard their season tickets as good value for money is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders not regarding their season tickets as good value for money.
- H₃: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) who are willing to continue their current relationship is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders who are not willing to continue their current relationship with the service provider.
- H₄: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) who are willing to recommend the service provider to potential spectators is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders who are not willing to recommend the service provider to potential spectators.
- H₅: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) with a high perception of marketing effectiveness is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders with a low perception of marketing effectiveness.
- H₆: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) with a strong perception of image is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders with a low perception of image.
- H₇: The relationship quality of stakeholders (spectators) with a positive perception of media relationships is significantly higher than the relationship quality of stakeholders with a negative perception of media relationships.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Response rate

The effective response rate of the mail survey among spectators (season ticket holders) was 25.50%.

Descriptive statistics of relationship quality

The descriptive statistics indicate the sample size, mean, standard deviation and two-top box score in table 1, and the mean values in table 2. The two-top box score is an indication of the percentage of respondents who have selected scale values 9 and 10. Frequency distribution results in table 3 are based on a 5-point scale and indicate the

percentages of the responses on each scale item.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

| | N | Mean | Standard deviation | Two-top box score |
|--------------------------------|----------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Relationship quality | 484 | 6.22 | 2.28 | 11.60% |
| Propensity to leave (PTL) | 484 | 6.72 | 2.27 | 19.90% |
| Value for money (VFM) | 484 | 6.70 | 2.12 | 18.70% |
| Willingness to recommend (WTR) | 484 | 6.67 | 2.24 | 18.20% |

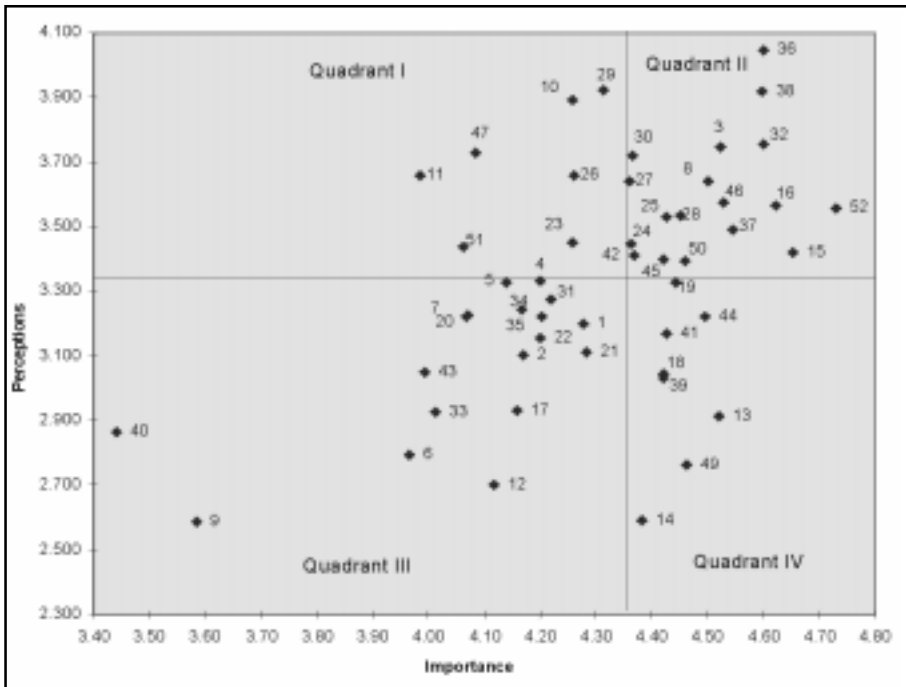
* N = sample size

** The range of scale from 0 - 10 where 0 = very poor and 10 = excellent

Marketing effectiveness measurement

Marketing effectiveness was measured on a 5-point Likert scale for both importance and perception of performance.

Figure 1: XY Plot of Marketing Effectiveness



In order to subtract the most objective criteria for a quadrant separation, the mean value of each statement was used as the central measurement for both importance and perception of performance. With this approach it was possible to distinguish between the four different quadrants:

- Quadrant I:** Low importance, High Perception
- Quadrant II:** High importance, High perception
- Quadrant III:** Low importance, Low perception
- Quadrant IV:** High importance, Low perception

The mean scores for each statement on both importance and perception of performance are illustrated on the vertical and horizontal axis. The XY plot identifies specific marketing problem areas as the horizontal axis represents the column where the spectators provided an indication of the importance of each statement on a 5-point scale. The vertical axis represents the evaluation of the spectators' experience on each of the statements regarding the service provider.

The individual statements were numerically identified according to their numerical sequence in the questionnaire. Both axis X and Y were restricted to a variance width of the scale rating. Based on the variance width for each axis, a decision was taken to restrict the scale values for importance to a maximum of 4.80 and a minimum of 3.40, whilst the perception on performance scale was restricted to a maximum of 4.10 and a minimum of 2.3. The most important problem areas are identified in quadrant IV and represents the following statements:

Quadrant IV

| | | | |
|-----------|--|--------------|--------------|
| 14 | Image of the Sport Union's management | 4.383 | 2.590 |
| 49 | The number of spectators visiting matches at the stadium | 4.462 | 2.762 |
| 13 | Marketing to win and to keep the loyalty of the spectators | 4.521 | 2.915 |
| 39 | Parking in and around the stadium | 4.422 | 3.033 |
| 18 | Communication to spectators (keep spectators informed) | 4.421 | 3.046 |
| 41 | The sound system and public address system | 4.426 | 3.168 |
| 44 | Placement of regular match schedules and information on other matches in newspapers | 4.495 | 3.222 |

* The range of scale from 1 - 5

Quadrant II is a more positive quadrant and represents statements with a high importance and a high perception:

Quadrant II

| | | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|--------------|
| 36 | Neatness of the stadium | 4.602 | 4.048 |
| 38 | Safety and security of the stadium | 4.598 | 3.918 |
| 3 | The strong marketing identity | 4.525 | 3.746 |
| 32 | Spirit of the stadium spectators | 4.601 | 3.754 |
| 8 | Marketing of the sport to children | 4.503 | 3.641 |
| 46 | Behaviour of the spectators on the pavilion | 4.530 | 3.575 |
| 16 | Image of the players | 4.622 | 3.566 |
| 52 | International exposure | 4.731 | 3.557 |
| 37 | The toilet facilities at the stadium | 4.547 | 3.490 |

* The range of scale from 1 – 5

Table 2: Mean values

| | Mean values (5 point scale) | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Importance | Perception of performance |
| Marketing | 4.21 | 3.19 |
| Image | 4.63 | 3.09 |
| Communication | 4.40 | 2.97 |
| Tickets | 4.36 | 3.35 |
| Involvement | 4.40 | 3.74 |
| Stadium | 4.26 | 3.21 |
| Media relationships | 4.35 | 3.15 |
| Stakeholders (Spectators) | 3.60 | 3.21 |

The mean values of *importance* are significantly higher than the mean values of *perception of performance* for all the categories. This result is an indication of the importance of all the categories to the clients and the weak performance of the service provider on these categories.

Table 3: Frequency distribution table

| | Relationship quality | Propensity to leave | Value for money | Willingness to recommend |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 0 | 1.90% | 2.1% | 0.20% | 1.90% |
| 1 | 1.90% | 0.80% | 0.60% | 1.20% |
| 2 | 3.10% | 2.70% | 3.30% | 2.70% |
| 3 | 6.80% | 4.10% | 5.00% | 3.50% |
| 4 | 6.60% | 4.30% | 6.20% | 4.10% |
| 5 | 17.80% | 13.00% | 11.20% | 14.50% |
| 6 | 14.70% | 11.60% | 14.60% | 12.40% |
| 7 | 17.40% | 19.30% | 20.70% | 19.30% |
| 8 | 18.20% | 22.20% | 19.50% | 22.20% |
| 9 | 3.50% | 9.30% | 7.70% | 8.30% |
| 10 | 8.10% | 10.60% | 11.00% | 9.90% |
| Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

* The frequencies are the percentage of responses on each scale item.

* Willingness to continue the current relationship was measured as the inverse of propensity to leave.

Validity and reliability

Factor analysis was used to determine the validity of the data in the data set. Principle component analysis and a Varimax rotation accounting for 62% of the variance in the importance section and 55% of the variance in the

perception section extracted eight factors. By employing the Varimax rotation method a rotated factor pattern was compiled and only items with factor loadings

greater than 0.4 during this rotation have been included in the relevant factors. The factor loadings are an indication of the contribution of each item to the variance in each factor. Items 14, 26, 47 and 48 were eliminated due to them not contributing to the significance norm of 0.4. These factors explain 62% (internal consistency) of the variation in the importance section of the data set and eight factors selected are shown in table 4. The factors explain 55% (internal consistency) of the variation in the perception section of the data set and the eight factors selected are shown in table 5.

Table 4: Factor analysis based on importance

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---|-------|---|---|-------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>Aggressive marketing of rugby</i> | | | 0.704 | | | | | |
| <i>Advertising in newspapers, magazines, radio & TV</i> | | | 0.698 | | | | | |
| <i>The strong marketing identity</i> | | | 0.646 | | | | | |
| <i>Using rugby players in marketing</i> | | | | | | 0.741 | | |
| <i>The appearance of rugby players at promotional events</i> | | | | | | 0.759 | | |
| <i>Marketing/introducing of new/young players to spectators</i> | | | | | | 0.552 | | |
| <i>Marketing of season tickets</i> | | | 0.549 | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing of rugby to children</i> | | | 0.440 | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing of rugby to women</i> | | | 0.401 | | | | | |
| <i>Using sponsorships in marketing</i> | | | 0.462 | | | | | |

Table 4 (continued):

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|---|---|-------|---|----------------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>The use of rugby souvenirs (caps, jerseys, emblems, cushions)</i> | | | | | | | | 0.497 |
| <i>Convincing non-rugby spectators and TV spectators to visit the stadium</i> | | | | | | | | 0.684 |
| <i>Marketing to win and to keep the loyalty of the spectators</i> | | | | | | | | 0.642 |
| <i>The total image of the team Image of the players</i> | | | | | | | 0.783 0.772 | |
| <i>The accessibility of the Union to the public</i> | | | | | 0.503 | | | |
| <i>Communication with spectators (keep spectators informed)</i> | | | | | 0.501 | | | |
| <i>Communication with the media (newspapers, radio, TV)</i> | | | | | 0.481 | | | |
| <i>The variety of ticket packages marketed</i> | | 0.437 | | | | | | |
| <i>The price of a season ticket</i> | | 0.603 | | | | | | |
| <i>The price of a ticket at the gate</i> | | 0.741 | | | | | | |
| <i>The availability of season tickets</i> | | 0.765 | | | | | | |
| <i>The availability of tickets in general</i> | | 0.756 | | | | | | |
| <i>Convenience to obtain a ticket</i> | | 0.718 | | | | | | |

Table 4 (continued):

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---|---|-------|---|-------|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>The involvement with club rugby</i> | | | | 0.706 | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with school rugby</i> | | | | 0.747 | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with junior rugby</i> | | | | 0.743 | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with rugby clinics</i> | | | | 0.765 | | | | |
| <i>The curtain-raisers during important matches</i> | 0.430 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Spirit of the spectator</i> | 0.569 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The entertainment of spectators to build atmosphere (music, professional announcer)</i> | 0.324 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Catering facilities at the stadium</i> | 0.717 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Quality of the food</i> | 0.747 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Neatness of the stadium</i> | 0.753 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The toilet facilities at the stadium</i> | 0.766 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Safety & security of the stadium</i> | 0.691 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Parking in and around the stadium</i> | 0.598 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The accessibility to players for spectators after a match</i> | | | | | | 0.510 | | |
| <i>The sound system and public address system</i> | 0.508 | | | | | | | |

Table 4 (continued):

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|---|---|---|-------|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>Publicity in newspapers</i> | | | | | 0.530 | | | |
| <i>Talk shows on radio</i> | | | | | 0.667 | | | |
| <i>Placement of regular match schedules and information on other matches in newspapers</i> | | | | | 0.495 | | | |
| <i>Maintaining effective media relationships</i> | | | | | 0.565 | | | |
| <i>Behaviour of the spectators on the pavilion</i> | 0.495 | | | | | | | |

All the items identified in factors 1-5 and 7-8 were very consistent except for the items in factor 6 and there was no overlapping of items in factors 1-8.

Table 5: Factor analysis based on perception of performance

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>Aggressive marketing of rugby</i> | 0.553 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Advertising in newspaper, magazines, radio & TV</i> | 0.522 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The strong marketing identity</i> | 0.471 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Using rugby players in marketing</i> | 0.679 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The appearance of rugby players at promotional events</i> | 0.670 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing/introducing of new/young players to spectators</i> | 0.685 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing of season tickets</i> | 0.631 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing of rugby to children</i> | 0.524 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Marketing of rugby to women</i> | 0.606 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Using sponsorships in marketing</i> | 0.555 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The use of rugby souvenirs (caps, jerseys, emblems, cushions)</i> | 0.531 | | | | | | | |
| <i>Convincing non-rugby spectators and TV spectators to visit the stadium</i> | 0.656 | | | | | | | |

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|-------|-------|---|-------|---|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>Marketing to win and to keep the loyalty of the spectators</i> | 0.598 | | | | | | | |
| <i>The total image of the team</i> | | | | | | 0.761 | | |
| <i>Image of the players</i> | | | | | | 0.786 | | |
| <i>The accessibility of the Union to the public</i> | | | | | | | | 0.333 |
| <i>Communication with spectators (keep spectators informed)</i> | | 0.426 | | | | | | |
| <i>Communication with the media (newspapers, radio, TV)</i> | | 0.555 | | | | | | |
| <i>The variety of ticket packages marketed</i> | | | 0.521 | | | | | |
| <i>The price of a season ticket</i> | | | 0.566 | | | | | |
| <i>The price of a ticket at the gate</i> | | | 0.564 | | | | | |
| <i>The availability of season tickets</i> | | | 0.735 | | | | | |
| <i>The availability of tickets in general</i> | | | 0.754 | | | | | |
| <i>Convenience of obtaining a ticket</i> | | | 0.666 | | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with club rugby</i> | | | | 0.713 | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with school rugby</i> | | | | 0.735 | | | | |
| <i>The involvement with junior rugby</i> | | | | 0.745 | | | | |

Table 5 (continued):

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|---|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>The involvement with rugby clinics</i> | | | | 0.731 | | | | |
| <i>The curtain-raisers during important matches</i> | | | | | | | | 0.411 |
| <i>Spirit of the spectator</i> | | | | | | | | 0.436 |
| <i>The entertainment of the spectators to build atmosphere (music, professional announcer)</i> | | | | | | | | 0.535 |
| <i>Catering facilities at the stadium</i> | | | | | | | 0.830 | |
| <i>Quality of the food</i> | | | | | | | 0.837 | |
| <i>Neatness of the stadium</i> | | | | | 0.740 | | | |
| <i>The toilet facilities at the stadium</i> | | | | | 0.724 | | | |
| <i>Safety & security of the stadium</i> | | | | | 0.625 | | | |
| <i>Parking in and around the stadium</i> | | | | | | | 0.412 | |
| <i>The accessibility of players to spectators after a match</i> | | | | | | | 0.439 | |
| <i>The sound system and public address system</i> | | 0.438 | | | | | | |
| <i>Publicity in newspapers</i> | | 0.702 | | | | | | |
| <i>Talk shows on radio</i> | | 0.637 | | | | | | |
| <i>Placement of regular match schedules and information on other matches in newspapers</i> | | 0.652 | | | | | | |

Table 5 (continued):

| Item | Factor | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|-------|---|---|-------|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| <i>Maintaining effective media relationships</i> | | 0.676 | | | | | | |
| <i>Behaviour of the spectators on the pavilion</i> | | | | | 0.448 | | | |

The following items were the major contributors to each factor in the perception of performance:

Factor 1: Marketing and introducing of new / young players to spectators (item 6).

Factor 2: Publicity in newspapers (item 42).

Factor 3: The availability of tickets in general (item 24).

Factor 4: Involvement with junior sport (item 29).

Factor 5: Neatness of the stadium (item 36).

Factor 6: Image of the players (16).

Factor 7: Quality of food (item 35).

Factor 8: The entertainment of the spectators to build atmosphere (item 33).

Reliability was computed by means of the Cronbach alpha coefficient. Reliability results of these factors were computed by means of Cronbach alpha based on the total data, importance and perception of performance. The reliability for total evaluation of the data set is 95,12% and reliability for importance and perception of performance are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Reliability results based on importance and perception

| Items | Reliability for importance | Reliability for perception of performance |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Marketing (items 1 - 13) | 85, 85% | 88,96% |
| Image (items 14 - 16) | 83, 88% | 76,22% |
| Communication (items 17 - 19) | 79, 81% | 72,80% |
| Tickets (items 20 - 25) | 86, 41% | 80,43% |
| Involvement (items 26 - 30) | 87, 56% | 81,00% |
| Stadium (items 31 - 41) | 87, 21% | 76,62% |
| Media relationships (items 42 - 45) | 82, 43% | 80,60% |
| Spectators (items 46 - 48) | 29, 03% | 27,55% |

The reliability results for both importance and perception of performance are relatively high, considering that a standardised measurement instrument was not used. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of more than 70% was used as the norm and all items were found to be reliable, with the exception of items 46 - 48. The reason for the low reliability of these items can possibly be ascribed to the controversial aspect of playing sport on a Sunday.

Hypotheses testing

Two-tailed hypotheses were used in order to perform tests for significant differences based on the p-value and to provide direction (higher and lower). ANOVA was used to determine the difference between categories 1 and 2 as described in table 7.

Subjective criteria were determined for the qualitative labels "high" and "low". On the 0-10 point scale, a qualitative label of "high" was assigned to scale values between 7-10 and the "low" label were assigned to scale values less than 7.

ANOVA

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine group differences on a single dependent variable. The dependent variable of relationship quality measured the effect of the various independent variables on the spectator's

perception (test units) of the service provider's perception. The ANOVA results for the different hypotheses are summarised in table 7.

Table 7: ANOVA results

| Variable | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------|---------|
| Independent | Dependent | Mean | p-value |
| LOT [Category 1: 1 - 2 years] LOT [Category 2: > 3 years] | Relationship quality | 5,32 7,21 | 0.0001 |
| VFM [Category 1: 0 - 6] VFM [Category 2: 7 - 10] | Relationship quality | 5,17 6,95 | 0.0001 |
| PTL [Category 1: 0 - 6] PTL [Category 2: 7 - 10] | Relationship quality | 4,89 7,03 | 0.0001 |
| WTR [Category 1: 0 - 6] WTR [Category 2: 7 - 10] | Relationship quality | 4,92 7,08 | 0.0001 |
| MEFF [Category 1: 1 - 3] MEFF [Category 2: 4 - 5] | Relationship quality | 5,66 6,56 | 0.0001 |
| Image [Category 1: 1 - 3] Image [Category 2: 4 - 5] | Relationship quality | 5,49 7,10 | 0.0001 |
| COMM [Category 1: 1 - 3] COMM [Category 2: 4 - 5] | Relationship quality | 5,77 6,92 | 0.0001 |

* LOT= Length of time

* PTL= Propensity to leave

* MEFF = Marketing effectiveness

* VFM = Value for money

* WTR = Willingness to recommend

* COMM = Communication

All hypotheses were accepted based on the differences in the mean values of the different categories and are statistically significant based on the p-value for each ANOVA result.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the empirical study can be regarded as valid and reliable based on the research results. The overall reliability for the evaluation of the data set is a reliability coefficient of 0.9512 and the scientific execution of the methodology increased the validity of the results.

Based on the validity and reliability results of this study, the following major conclusions are drawn:

- Relationship quality is influenced by the duration a spectator is engaged in the relationship with a service provider. The longer the relationship a spectator has with a service provider the higher the quality of the current relationship.
- The quality of the relationship is influenced by the spectator's perceived value for money based on his experience of the service provided to him by the service provider. *The higher the perceived value for money the higher the quality of the current relationship.*
- Propensity of a spectator not to leave or not to terminate the current relationship with a service provider influences the relationship quality between a service provider and a client. *The higher the quality of the relationship the lower the propensity to leave and to terminate a current relationship with a service provider.*
- Willingness of a spectator to recommend his current service provider to a potential client influences the quality of the current relationship between a service provider and a spectator. *The higher the quality of the current relationship the higher the willingness of a spectator will be to recommend the service provider to a potential spectator or spectators.*
- The quality of the current relationship between a service provider and a spectator is influenced by a spectator's perception of the marketing effectiveness of a service provider. *The higher the spectator's perception of marketing effectiveness, the higher the quality of the current relationship with a service provider.*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Recommendations for future research are divided into recommendations based on the

literature review and recommendations based on the empirical research.

Recommendations based on the literature review

More literature is needed on marketing and relationship marketing focusing on sport.

Recommendations based on the empirical research

Firstly, to develop a relationship quality model by applying the RELQUAL model (Ewing, 1996) specifically on rugby and on professional sport unions in general and to compare the findings across different sport unions and administrations.

Secondly, to develop a marketing mix specifically for professional sport unions in general.

Thirdly, to determine the effect of a winning team on the marketing effectiveness, on short and long-term relationship quality with a sport union and to investigate the effect that a winning team has on the relationship quality of the stakeholders and spectators.

Fourthly, to develop a marketing orientation for management of sport unions, officials and players.

Recommendations aimed at communication experts

Firstly, to use media relations as a conduit for communicating with the different stakeholders.

Secondly, to conduct communication segmentation to make provision for the unique communication needs of each group of stakeholders.

Thirdly, to investigate and address the corporate image of sport bodies and unions.

Fourthly, to determine the influence of publicity on the marketing effectiveness on sport unions and sport bodies.

Fifthly, to compile a training program for developing and enhancing the communication skills of officials and players.

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