

# **The Importance Of Social Media In Their Contribution To The Marketing Of Sport Events**

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Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

## **Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management**

Submitted to Prof. Dr. Astrid Dickinger

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## **Affidavit**

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this paper is on the importance and the influence of new media, with a focus on impact of social media and the mobile Internet on the marketing for sport events. In order to critically assess the matter at hand, the author analyzes whether the use of new media has a remarkable impact on consumers' preferences and behaviors when it comes to sport events. Firstly, the unclearness of how new media can be used to communicate with a target market is analyzed. Secondly, the importance of communication and its different goals as well as its development is canvassed. Thirdly, the research question of "*how can new media be successfully employed as a marketing channel for sport events*" is posed and subsequently answered. Afterwards, the different qualitative investigation methods employed by the author are presented. Lastly, the results of the content analysis and netnography are assessed.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Relevance of topic

Since its diffusion, new media of communication have become one of the most commonly used communication and information methods for people of all ages, genders, nationalities and religious beliefs. Nowadays, major companies rely very often on the power and effect that new media have on their brand and proactively try to use these tools in order to create a positive image of their business and any related event. It comes therefore natural to think that for events of any kind, marketers seek to attract fans and create awareness of the event especially through this relatively new and not completely understood communication and involvement method that can be defined as “New Media” (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

Nowadays, new media are being used to transmit multiple messages and are able to reach global audiences. Before the last three decades, the ability to reach global audiences more affordably as we do today was an inconsiderable possibility for marketers or businessmen. However, since the development of communication tools such as the Internet and information-transmission methods like social media or the mobile Internet, this has radically changed (Pickton & Broderick, 2005). Therefore, as a logical extension of this thought, new media nowadays cover a fundamental role in our everyday lives as well as in the more commercial realities that float around sport events. However, although a few studies have been carried out on this nascent topic and on the modern interconnection between new media and sport (Bryant, 2006; Rowe, 1995; Bershtain and Blain, 2003; et al.), the actual effectiveness of a sport event’s marketing through new media hasn’t been thoroughly understood.

## **1.2 Research Question**

To better understand what aspects of sport events marketing through new media must be improved in order to communicate effectively and fulfill the marketer's communication wishes, one key research question must be addressed:

*"How can new media be successfully employed as a marketing channel for events?"*

Later on, there can be sub-questions identified. For instance:

*"Which communication goals can be best achieved through certain media?"*

Potential communication goals include:

- Ticket sales
- People or fan involvement/engagement
- Awareness Building

## **1.3 Research aims and objectives**

Today, the Internet has become a significant tool for sport coverage in general, as it allows fans to access the latest information and results of their favorite teams, players and events as well (K. M. Lange, 2002).

The aim of this thesis is to find out which communication goals are pursued through electronic channels to market a sport event. In order to do this, an analysis of the content posted on Facebook fan pages will be qualitatively analyzed. Also, the author will describe the findings of online interactivity retrieved through a netnographic research.

## **1.4 Method of Investigation**

The method of investigation will include a qualitative content analysis of relevant information that the author will find on four different Facebook fan pages for sport events.

Furthermore, a netnographic research of people's online interaction on Facebook and Twitter will be carried out in order to understand how marketers communicate through online media and how this communication raises awareness, increases the sales of tickets or involves the fans in a specific event.

## **1.5 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 gives an outline of the most important topics for the research carried out by the author, including different communication theories, communication goals, old and new media, event and sport tourism as well as the sociality in sport events.

Chapter 3 contains the literature related to the methodology that the author used in her research, which includes both content analysis and netnography.

Chapter 4 focuses on the overall findings that the author retrieved from the content analysis and netnography of the chosen social media fan pages, namely Facebook and Twitter. This chapter also includes a short overlook of the usage of old media such as newspapers and magazines for marketing purposes of the chosen events.

Chapter 5 consists of the conclusions drawn by the author according to the studies she conducted, as well as a discussion where possible implementations are proposed.

Chapters 6 and 7 are, correspondingly, the bibliography and an appendix, which includes different statistical data retrieved mainly from Facebook.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 The importance of communication and media

The promotion of sport events is a marketing technique that requires the targeting of a niche market. When marketing sport events, it is fundamental to try and reach subjectivity in the transmission of certain messages that will be received by fans and/or others directly involved in the “consumption” of a specific service.

Impressions of the organization have a strong impact on the customers’ perception of a product or service (Pickton & Broderick, 2005). It therefore comes natural to understand that the activities of a sponsor for a specific event, even if not directly related to the event, are also fundamental in the marketing of the product.

In general, a medium can be defined as:

*“[...] Anything that is capable of carrying or transmitting a marketing communications message to one or more people”*

(Pickton & Broderick, 2005, p. 116).

Finally, in a globalized world where information is at the hand of almost everyone, understanding how activity through media, and social media in particular, can satisfy the needs of fans, is fundamental for sport event organizers as it will help them to *“increase the levels of involvement and ultimately, improve business results”* (Van Shaik, 2012).

### 2.2 Old Media

In general, companies rely on effective ads in order to get the customers to purchase a specific product or service. In order to do so, companies need to develop a specific media strategy, which can be defined as *“the process of analyzing and choosing media for an advertising and promotion campaigns”* (Clow & Baack, 2010, p. 234). In order to develop this media strategy, a media planning is of fundamental importance. In order to successfully implement a media plan, a company needs to carefully identify a segment of the market to be targeted and to understand what the main influencers of its publics’ decision-making process are.

Media plans can be more focused on what we call the “old media” or on the more modern “new media” or on a hybrid advertising strategy. This chapter looks at the different advantages and disadvantages in the usage of three different old media: the television, newspapers and the radio. One could easily argue that with the current advancements in technology, the usage and reception of old-media-marketing is futile. However, it is important to understand how different aims and communication goals require wide spectrum of communication tools and media to transmit a specific message. These tools can, even in our modern days, be identified in the older media.

### **2.2.1 Television**

According to R. L. Phillips (2005), television advertising is a marketing method that diverges broadly both in terms of demand as well as in desirability. This is applicable to both the company advertising as well as to the consumer. Not only will marketer much rather have his spot broadcasted at a hit prime-time TV show, rather than at 5 am during an unknown event; but also the consumer will much rather watch an ad that actually fits his or hers needs, as stated in the “*Recency Theory*” (Fill, 2009). This brings us to one of the first drawbacks of television advertising: the inability to efficiently target the market, something that Clow and Baack (2010) identified as a prerequisite in creating a successful media plan. Another disadvantage of television advertising is the great clutter present due to so many ads being broadcasted during a program. As it can be read in Clow’s and Baack’s paper (2010), during prime-time shows in the U.S., television ads average to circa 19 minutes and 31 ads for every hour of programming and breaks of up to 5 minutes are becoming more and more popular. The audience has therefore started to switch channels during commercial breaks, making ads at the beginning and at the end of these breaks much more valuable than the ones in the middle (Clow & Baack, 2010). Another problem with television advertising is its short life-span: most ads need to capture the audiences’ attention in about 30 second (a good example for this are the Super Bowl 30-second ads) and the marketers therefore need to make a very good job in creating an effective, catchy and short TV ad all in one. As defined by Keegan and Green (2011), television ads are forms of “*paid television programming in which a particular product is demonstrated, explained and offered for sale to viewers*” (p. 480). This brings us to the next shortcoming of

marketing using television as a medium: the overall costs per ad are extremely high (Clow & Baack, 2010), as compared to the costs of advertising through most of the newer media. These costs don't only refer to the actual time a company needs to pay for in order to be broadcasted, but the costs of producing the ad itself can be very high: on average, the costs for producing a TV ad in the U.S. can reach up to \$358,000 (Clow & Baack, 2010).

However, although the overall costs can be very high, the cost per contact is low which, as Clow and Baack (2010) state, can be a justification to spend up to \$3 million to produce a 30 second ad to be broadcasted during the Super Bowl. According to Clow and Baack (2010), there are many other advantages to television advertising, such as its high intrusion value, which can be obtained through motions and sounds; its high frequency potential and most of all its high reach. In fact, although nowadays the Internet has taken over a large amount of all advertising activities, people still watch television at home; they have favorite TV shows, movies and even online personalities, all factors that influence the decision for individuals' to turn on their televisions.

Nowadays, television advertising may or may not be the best option for sport events. However, the strong involvement and cloud of emotionality that surround sports make sport games on TV interesting for advertisers, as they can promote a specific event to a group of targeted customers who are likely to watch certain games or matches on television. L. A. Wenner (1989) supports this statement by writing: *"what makes the sports contest on television so appealing to advertisers may be the relative intensity with which sports fans view the game"* (p. 14).

### **2.2.2 Newspapers**

Today, more people than ever before read newspapers; this, thanks to the many different ways one can now read the news (Kilman, 2012). According to the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), more than 50 percent of the world's adult populations read the newspapers. The numbers speak clearly: according to the World Press Trend Report of 2012, 2.5 billion people read print-newspapers and 600 million read them in digital form. According to Kilman (2012) these numbers represent *"more readers and users than total global users of the Internet"*. This shift towards online-readership and the merging of old and new

media has forced newspapers to adapt and change accordingly. The Huffington Post, for example, is now created to best fit the short attention spans and social-media dependency of the so-called “*wired generation*” (The Economist, 2012). The aims themselves of newspapers have slightly changed, with papers now wanting to post stories that stick into the readers’ minds and in order to do this, they mix both more serious and frothy news, these being accompanied by different opinions of guest bloggers (The Economist, 2012). These and other factors have caused a “*lack of intensity*” when considering the amount of time digital-news readers spend reading the news online as compared to print news. This, in turn, compromised the newspapers’ digital revenues, as they haven’t replaced the revenues lost in print with digital advertising (WAN-IFRA, 2012).

When considering more traditional print newspapers, Clow and Baack (2010) identify a variety of pros and cons of newspaper advertising. First of all, newspapers offer a high *geographic selectivity* as people in one specific area mainly purchase them. Also, Clow and Baack (2010) write that *flexibility* is a main advantage as short lead times allow companies to quickly change and/or adapt ads. Another fundamental pro is the *credibility* that newspapers offer to readers, as they mainly focus on factual information rather than buzz. This can be considered a fundamental attribute when looking at the effectiveness of communication, as a high credibility factor increases the likelihood of a message being accepted by the receiver (Fill, 2009).

From a monetary perspective, newspaper advertising has a small cost per exposure, mainly because of cumulative volume discounts that companies are offered when buying column inches for advertising space (Clow & Baack, 2010). At the same time, newspaper advertising carries a few disadvantages, these including the short life span of ads, the poor quality opportunities, especially when it comes to colored ads and the strong competition imposed by the classified ads that the Internet offers (Clow & Baack, 2010).

Overall, according to Larry Kilman (2012), the newspaper one is a strong industry. At the same time, he says:

*“[...] Newspapers are changing, and must change, if they are to continue fulfilling their traditional role as watchdog, and as the provider of credible news and*

*information that citizens need to make informed decisions in society. The problem is not one of audience. We have the audience. The challenge is largely one of business, of finding successful business models for the digital age”.*

### **2.2.3 Radio**

Nowadays, not only is the range of different platforms that allow the distribution and sharing of audio content constantly growing, but also more traditional telecommunications are merging and converging with modern media. Therefore, it is difficult to define the current and possible future meaning of “radio” or “radio industry” (Creative Skillset, 2010). Even if marketers are currently moving towards this merging of telecommunications and media, today the radio isn’t considered as being as exciting and glamorous as, for example, television is (Clow & Baack, 2010). For smaller or local companies, radio advertising might be a good and effective solution, as radio allows marketers to define specific (and usually quite small) target markets according to the format of the radio station (Clow & Baack, 2010). Furthermore, radio makes memorization much easier: in fact, thanks to visualization or memorization techniques, skilled radio advertisers make it easier for the listener to remember a specific message (Clow & Baack, 2010). According to Clow and Baack (2010), another advantage of radio advertising is its *flexibility* and *short lead-time*. Thanks to these attributes, the creation/modification and placing in air of an ad can take place within a few days or even hours. Another attribute of radio advertising is the *intimacy* that it is able to create between the listener and a certain radio personality that the listener has grown to like throughout the time he or she has been listening to that radio station (Clow & Baack, 2010). This advantage is relevant to the purpose of this thesis, as sport events carry a great amount of emotionality with them, a feeling that is often conveyed by sport commentators to which fans feel personally close to.

However, radio advertising has a variety of drawbacks. As Clow & Baack (2010) state, some of the first disadvantages of radio advertising are the *short exposure time* of ads, as they usually last only about 15 to 30 seconds; the *clutter*, which causes lack of concentration from the audience and an information overload; and only little chances for a radio station to reach a wider and eventually national audience as is possible, for example, with television. However, the afore mentioned merging of traditional and more modern media has made it possible for radios to

offer an online live streaming option, and therefore target the wider online-audience.

Radio advertising can be most successful when the target market, radio stations and broadcasting times are chosen carefully and when the ads are constructed in a way to immediately capture and retain the listener's attention throughout the ad (Clow & Baack, 2010).

### **2.3 New Media**

Throughout the past decades, there have been enormous advancements in computer technology, electronics and telecommunication. In particular, advancements made in the storage, analysis and retrieval of vast amounts of data have been occurring at an exponential rate. This, in turn, has led to the growth of database technology that has allowed companies to collect very useful information on customers and their buying behavior. However, according to Pickton and Broderick (2005) these technological advancements haven't only led to larger databases, but also to a variety of other facilitations that will be listed below:

- Targeted communication → thanks to the storage and accessibility of a large amount of data, marketers have been able to retrieve statistics that allowed them to target communications to specific groups. This, in turn, has made it possible to minimize the marketing waste and advertise as effectively as possible.
- Computing power vs. storage costs → the increase in computing power has led to a significant decrease in storage costs and has therefore allowed for organizations to develop their own database systems and marketing information.
- Shifts in communication means → social, lifestyle, demographic and other changes in peoples' attitudes and behaviors have caused the need for a shift in the way companies communicate with them. E.g. younger people nowadays have more spending power; they have the freedom to express their individuality by supporting a specific brand. Also, more people are living longer and this, in turn, has brought to the identification of new needs, wants and target groups (Pickton & Broderick, 2005, p. 106).
- More direct and personal communication

In addition, new media has shown to have such power that it hasn't only changed marketing techniques, but it has also significantly revolutionized customers' buying behavior itself. More specifically, the technology associated with new media, permits:

1. Interactivity
2. Shorter response times
3. More direct communications
4. More sophisticated communications

(Pickton & Broderick, 2005, p. 223)

When looking at the narrower field of sports and sport events, through new media people have been given the ability to share their interests for a specific team or sports event, exchange information and knowledge, or simply to express their affection for one specific team.

At this point, it becomes clear that new media hasn't only facilitated the companies' outreach and ability to keep in touch and learn more about their customers: new media has and keeps on having a substantial impact on the way customers and consumers communicate with each other and with the product/service providers.

### **2.3.1 The Internet**

According to the Internet Advertising Report (IAB) (2012), the Internet Advertising Revenues hit a historic high in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2012, with an 18% increase since the same period in 2011 and with revenues reaching almost *\$9,3 billion*. These numbers clearly show the significance of online advertising for marketers and the value that they are able to get from using digital media.

The following figure depicts the constant increase in online advertising revenues since 1996. The graph clearly shows an almost vertical increase in digital advertising at a monthly rate: in fact, only the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2012 saw a 6% increase in revenues from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter of that same year.

Quarterly revenue growth trends Q1 1996 - Q3 2012 (\$ billions)

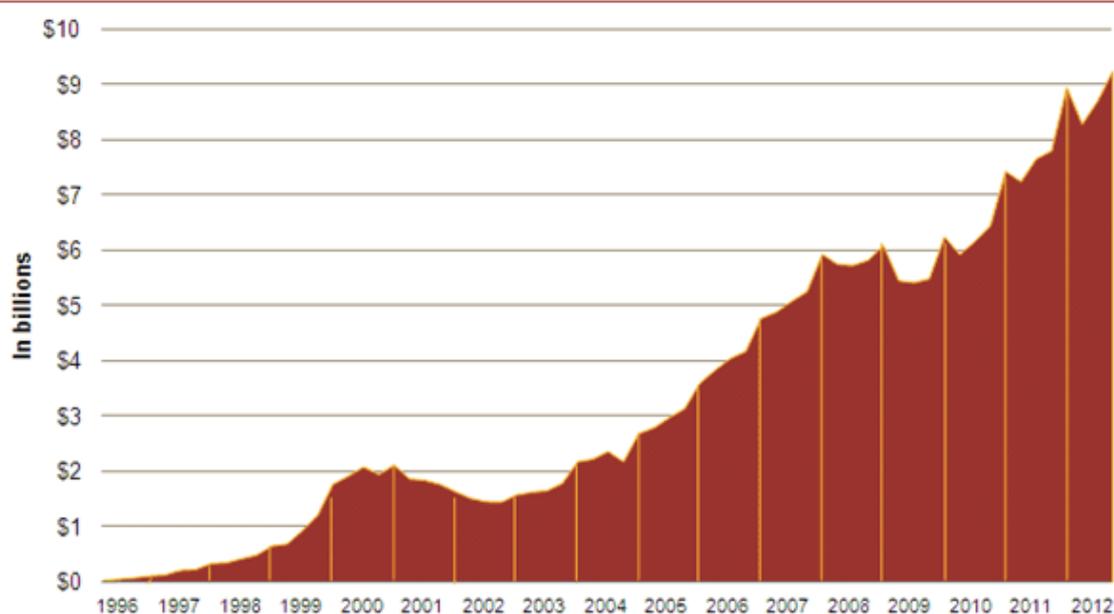


Figure A - Growth Trends in Online Advertising (Source: IAB)

As Fill (2009) states, the Internet has now given the chance to marketers and consumers to start a two-way communication and to convey messages to consumers in radically different ways than they used to do once. Today, communications are interactive, allowing both parties to find information much faster and to enter transaction processes in completely new ways than they used to with older media. Fill (2009) says:

*“The internet is both a distribution channel and a communication medium, one that enables consumers and organizations to communicate in radically different ways. It allows for interactivity and is possibly the best medium to enable dialogue”* (p. 23).

In the United Kingdom, the Internet overtook Television as the advertising sector with the largest market share already four years ago in 2009, signaling a radical change in the way advertising is done and perceived (Pfeiffer & Zinnbauer, 2010).

The thought of Randall Rothenberg, CEO of the IAB, is very much similar to Fill’s, as he sees this steady increase in online advertising revenues as a result of the efficiency of the Internet as a communication medium. Randall (2012) views the Internet as a particularly effective medium when it comes to engaging and interacting with customers; he states that thanks to the Internet “[customers] are

*no longer passive, but are active participants in contemporary media online, through social media, and on-the-go with mobile” (IAB Internet Advertising Revenue Report, 2012).*

This last statement also helps us understand a fundamental characteristic of the Internet: its capability to adapt to different types of hardware, making its penetration possible in almost any modern environment.

As a matter of fact, many different authors such as Moriarty, Wells & Mitchell (2009), Elliott (2013) or Fill (2009) agree on the previously mentioned interactivity and engagement opportunities that the Internet offers. These new forms of two-way communication are at the basis of an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) program, which will be analyzed in the later chapters. These shifts in communication are also allowing organizations to receive real-time feedback from consumers and leverage it in order to create long-term relationships with customers (Moriarty, Wells, & Mitchell, 2009). While with more traditional media customers’ responses were mainly collected through – often expensive – research; the Internet offers extremely valuable opportunities and cost reductions when it comes to researching the customers’ feedback as this happens in a *“real-time environment of ongoing communication”* (Moriarty, Wells, & Mitchell, 2009; p. 163) that allows companies to employ more interactive forms of communication such as online marketing or personal selling (Moriarty, Wells, & Mitchell, 2009).

### **2.3.2 Mobile Internet**

During the first ten years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, telephones have become more accessible and therefore popular, with the number of landlines increasing almost by a factor of four between 1976 and 2000 (Ling & Donner, 2009). In 2009, there were 740 million mobiles (Ling & Donner, 2009) and as of May 2012, the mobile market amounted to 1 billion phones *only* for China. Samsung alone shipped over 100 million devices and Apple over 37 million iPhones in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2013 around the globe (Epstein, 2013).

According to the Facebook Newsroom (2013), 751 million monthly active users used Facebook mobile products as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013 (Figure F, Appendix). These values are astonishing when we think that this number represents almost 1 seventh of the Earth’s population and that it’s only referring to one single online social

networking platform. As a matter of fact, mobile Internet users are creating a mass market: one that has access to a variety of tablets, smartphones and many other affordable mobile devices. This, in turn, has created a variety of new opportunities for marketers in terms of “*communications, media and technology players*” (Elliott, 2013). As a consequence, any industry that aims for mobile communication has been given the chance to start interacting with customers in a completely new, direct and intimate way. The outstanding improvements in both network coverage and quality have been some of the main drivers in the increased use of mobile Internet (Mohr, Lalloz, & O'Brien, 2012).

According to a Mobile Web Watch (2012) study conducted in 13 different countries across Europe, Latin America and South Africa, over 69% of people accessing the Internet, do so by using mobile devices. Out of these, 61% accessed it through a smartphone and the remaining do so either through a netbook or a tablet. This market is also narrowing the gender gap: in fact, 73% of men and 66% of women use the mobile Internet (Mohr, Lalloz, & O'Brien, 2012). What is more interesting for the purpose of this thesis is that 62% of mobile Internet users *accessed online communities* such as Facebook; and younger users did so *to connect with others* through online communities and chats (instant messaging), both of which have become key tools for users to interact and communicate with one another (Elliott, 2013).

One of the major social changes of the mobile market is the fact that we don't call anymore to a specific location: today, we want to get in touch with one individual, independently from where they are – and we can do this from anywhere we are. This, in turn, has changed the way we inter-correlate our daily actions and interactions (Ling & Donner, 2009). Mobile telephones are used for a variety of reasons, some of these being for teens to keep in touch with their friends, to check their social networks also while performing other activities (Ling & Donner, 2009) and it can be used by fans of a certain celebrity or team to stay up to date with the latest news and events.

It is clear that the world is becoming always more and more interconnected, which is causing competition to grow, as the number of devices and mobile platforms people can choose from is constantly increasing. Therefore, it is important for marketers to understand the new needs of active and engaged consumers “*who*

*take for granted interoperability, multi-device and multi-platform support and a superior user experience”* (Elliott, 2013). Furthermore, Elliott (2013) writes that, nowadays, mobile Internet users are particularly open to try new experiences, as they are also willing to pay higher prices for premium services. This is of utmost importance for marketers, who need to know where and when to effectively advertise. However, Mohr, Lalloz and O’Brien (2012) say that mobile Internet users are increasingly expressing a feeling of discontent with the cluttered online advertising; therefore, marketers will need to concentrate on more specific and targeted advertising techniques.

### **2.3.3 Social Media and Social Networks**

Throughout the past years, social media has grown in importance, usage and influence. In fact, apart from having proven to be a powerful communication tool (Fisher, 2011), social media has also caused a significant democratization of corporate communications (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011).

The numbers of active social network users are impressive and constantly growing. According to Facebook Newsroom (2013), Facebook boasts more than 655 million daily active users on average around the globe and it had a total of 1.1 billion Monthly Active Users (MAU) and 665 million Daily Active Users (DAU) as of March 2013 (figure F, Appendix).

As displayed in Figure F in the Appendix, the steady growth of Facebook in the past year is astonishing. Given that the research of this thesis will be focused on social media platforms, especially on Facebook, the author considered it useful to give the reader an overview of the reach and influence this network has on people in general. The first row in the figure focuses on the “social growth” of Facebook that saw an average of 4.5 billion likes and 4.75 billion items shared *daily* since August 2012. Instagram, a photo-sharing platform bought by Facebook for \$1 billion in April 2012 (BBC, 2012), has reached 100 million MAU as of February 2013.

Another interesting number for the purpose of this thesis shown in the aforementioned figure is the number of Local Businesses that have created a “page” on Facebook where they can post content, interact with users and get immediate feedback; this number has grown to be of 16 million pages as of May 2013: a 100% increase since June 2012. These numbers go hand-in-hand with the number of so-

called “promoted posts”, which are posts that the owner of a page decides to pay for in order for them to be displayed more frequently in a person’s newsfeed and hopefully shared more often. This type of promotion has reached the 7.5 million as of May of this year. Furthermore, since Facebook’s gone public, its incomes have boomed reaching a \$1.46 billion in revenues.

Another widely used online micro-blogging social network is Twitter; according to Lunden (2012), Twitter’s users amounted to 517 million accounts as of July 1, 2012. Twitter was launched on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2006, making this platform 7 years old (Smith, 2013). As of today, an average of 170 billion tweets are being sent daily by Twitter’s 200 million active users, who have 208 followers on average (Smith, 2013). Lunden (2012) writes that Twitter has been ranked as the second-biggest social networking site after Facebook and that around 1.058 billion public tweets were sent only in the month of July 2012. Although most of Twitter’s users are from the U.S., the three cities where people tweet the most from are Jakarta, Tokyo and London. These numbers are astonishing and they are meant to make the reader understand the interconnectivity and active involvement of people in today’s social media.

LinkedIn is another online platform that focuses more on professional networking. This platform counted 100 million members as of 2011 (linkedin.com, 2011). These numbers clearly define the significance and impact that social media have in today’s online-population. At a constant growing rate, social media have substantially contributed in transforming customers and consumers in general *“from silent, isolated and invisible individuals, into a noisy, public and even more unmanageable than usual collective”* (Patterson, 2012, cited in Zaglia 2012; p. 216). As a consequence, the management and successful leveraging of social media have become one of the main focuses of industries that need to actively involve consumers in their day-to-day communications. Being characterized by mainly perishable products and services, the tourism industry has proven a high interest and involvement in communicating through social media. For instance, sport events are a particularly perishable service that requires the presence of the consumer in order to be delivered. For this reason, sport events need to make the best use of social media communications in order to increase ticket sales to their maximum

and avoid empty seats/unsold tickets etc. as an “empty” seat symbolizes an irreplaceable loss in revenue.

For the purpose of this thesis it is fundamental to understand that social networks have a strong influence on the behavior of their members (de Valck, van Bruggen & Wierenga, 2009, cited in Zaglia 2012) and on the interpersonal relations that develop between the different members of these social networks (Granovetter, 1985). It therefore becomes a logical extension of this thought to believe that sport events, being social and interpersonal activities, are highly influenced by social networks. In addition, social networks have proven themselves as being platforms for strong social interaction between friends, family members, business colleagues as well as members of groups with similar interests (Mizruchi & Galaskiewicz, 1993; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Rapoport & Horvath, 1996; cited in Zaglia, 2012). This aspect of social networks is crucial to sport events, as these are gatherings of people supporting certain teams, leagues etc. and social platforms can therefore offer a virtual space to gather these fans and create involvement as well as excitement arousal *prior* to the actual event taking place.

Furthermore, social networks have proven themselves to be particularly effective in influencing consumer behavior when it comes to “*virtual communities of consumption, which feature characteristics like high consumer knowledge and companionship*” (de Valck et al., 2009; cited in Zaglia, 2012; p. 217).

## **2.4 Communication Models**

Marketing itself is an exchange between two parties. This exchange can either be transactional or collaborative (Fill, 2009). The first one takes place independently of any other exchanges and is usually defined as a single exchange at a specific point in time. The second type of exchange, however, identifies a kind of exchange with the aim of building a relationship between supplier and consumer, of creating customer loyalty and a long-lasting relationship over time. As stated by Fill (2009), relationships become stronger as the amount of exchanges increases, as the focus shifts from the product itself to the relationship. Communication, as efficiently defined by Fill (2009), can be defined as an „*oil [that] lubricates these exchanges and enables them to function. However, [...] different types of communication are necessary to engage with different audiences*“ (p. 24). However, globalisation and

an increasing competition in the channels through which you can interact with sport fans, makes it harder to segment smaller markets. Van Shaik (2012) writes that connecting with fans is now becoming harder and it requires more interaction and community building.

#### **2.4.1 Changes in consumer needs and wants**

The past century has seen a significant shift in customer needs and wants. In order for marketers to communicate successfully with customers, they need to understand this change.

Wants and needs are two different economic concepts. In point of fact, economists cannot objectively define the term “need” (Miller R. L., 2010). If a person says “I need some food”, it is hard to define whether this is a want, a wish or a need. If the person were starving then they would certainly need some food, maybe not luxury food, but surely some food items for them to survive. Usually, in everyday conversations, people casually use the term “need” to refer to a desire, a want (Miller R. L., 2010) that they want to satisfy. However, our resources are scarce and, therefore, not all wants can always be satisfied. This phenomenon, in turn, obligates people to make specific choices: when one buys something/goes somewhere, he or she won’t buy something else or go somewhere else. Therefore, it has become always more and more important for companies to react to this shift from needs to wants and to do so by offering something consumers might still want, although they do not strictly need it.

Furthermore, in the past two decades, there have been significant changes in the international travel market. These shifts are causing an increasing number of tourist needs, wants, types, and patterns to develop (Martin and Mason, 1987, cited in Standeven and DeKnop, 1999). These changes, as previously mentioned, are forcing tourism-related companies to shift their focus to areas that will provide the resources necessary to fulfill these new customer needs.

Sport events are themselves mere wants. Sports are a group activity; they are a fundamental recreation for people to distract themselves and to create a feeling of belonging to a specific group. In fact, as Rowe and Wenner state, cited in Lange (2002) “*mediated sport plays as a form of symbolic ritual in many modern industrialized societies*” (p. 26).

In order to understand how communication works and how can companies successfully leverage communication strategies, three different communication models and their best use will be analyzed in the following subchapters.

### **2.4.2 The Schramm Model**

The Schramm Model (1954, cited in Narula U., 2006) sees communication, and specifically mass communication, as a linear and one-directional process of communication. According to this model, the sender (*who?*) sends a message (*what?*) through specific media (*how? /by which means?*) to a receiver (*to whom?*).

However, Schramm (1960) states that it is necessary to consider the effect that the communicated message has on the receiver. In fact, throughout the communication process a variety of semiotics (signs, body language, questions asked and so on) influence the content of the communication. For this reason, Schramm states, it is necessary to consider pragmatic, syntactic and semantic semiotic rules when looking at a communication model.

It is fundamental to remember that the communications process defined by Schramm is at the basis of how we nowadays interpret and understand marketing communications as well as the macro and micro context in which marketing communications take place (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

### **2.4.3 Lasswell formula**

The Lasswell formula (Lasswell, 1948, cited in Narula U. 2006) of communication tells us which elements to look at in a communication process. Lasswell studies are particularly interesting for this research, as the sociologist was mainly interested in mass communication and propaganda; therefore focusing on and applying it to media.

Lasswell, similarly to Schramm, divides the communication process in five different blocks, identifying them with the following renowned statement: *Who* – the communicator – (says) *What* – the message – (through which) *Channel* – the channel – (to) *Whom* – the audience, the listener – (with what) *Effect* – an effect –.

In order to better visualize the communication model analyzed above, a simple graphic representation of the theory will be displayed.

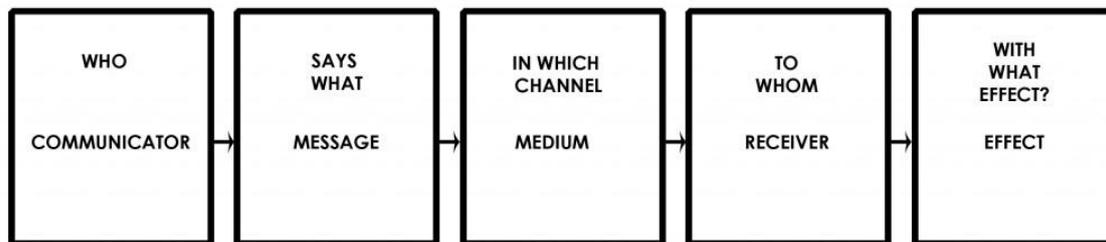


Figure B - Lasswell's linear communication model (source: Communication Theory)

#### 2.4.4 Shannon-Weaver Model

It becomes clear that the previously mentioned communication models do not encompass all the variables that might influence communication, especially so if communication occurs through new media, where a multitude of receivers is targeted and where communication does not happen in person. It is because of the spread of both “old” and new media that researchers have tried to better explain how communication takes place between parties. Shannon and Weaver (1948) theorized a model that doesn't only look at the sender, the message and the receiver. The model presented by Shannon and Weaver looks at the source of the information that will be transmitted through a transmitter and will be perceived by the receiver and finally interpreted by the targeted person/destination. Of course, throughout this process, a variety of factors can influence how the receiver interprets and perceived the transmitted message. Shannon and Weaver name these factors “noise” that transform the message from a transmitted signal to the received one.

Below the reader can see a graphic representation of the above-described model.

# The Shannon-Weaver Mathematical Model, 1949

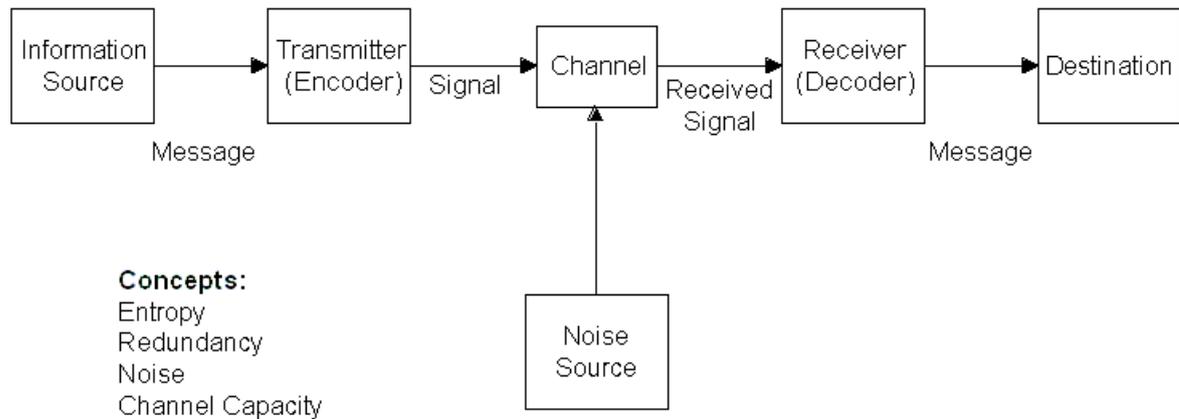


Figure C - Shannon-Weaver Communication Model (Source: SHKaminski.com)

## 2.5 A shift in the Challenges of Communication

Nowadays, when thinking about media, we are constantly drawn to review and rethink our perception of advertising, from both a marketer's as well as from a consumer's point of view. Messages can be carried by taxi, train, bus, packages, people, word of mouth, smells and so on (Bond, D. 2001). Therefore, it comes natural to think that our generation is unconsciously witnessing a persistent and constant shift in the challenge that advertisers and, therefore, „communicators“ are facing. Today, it's not about what and when to advertise: the questions have expanded and a variety of difficulties in delivering the right message, at the right time, to the right people and with as little waste as possible are being faced by marketers every day (Pickton & Broderick, 2005).

## 2.6 Different Goals of Communication

Different forms of communication intrinsically imply different messages delivered, in order to achieve different goals. In this section of the paper, three main goals of communication for the marketing of sport events will be taken into consideration:

1. *Ticket sales*
2. *People/fan involvement*
3. *Awareness building*

Clearly, different communication goals can be delivered through different channels and media. Fisher (2011) states that social media are most effective tools when it comes to fan interaction and involvement as well as to create a connection between fans and their favorite teams or leagues. In addition, he states, social media has also proven its effectiveness in ticket and merchandise sales as well as in boosting TV viewership. Fisher (2011) continues, and states that although social media has demonstrated its multilateral success in communication with fans and consumers, *“there remains nothing close to one-size-fits-all approach for effectively leveraging social media”* (p. 14). Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre (2011) agree with Fisher and write that however powerful social media has proven to be in the past years, *„many executives [...] are [still] unable to develop strategies and allocate resources to engage effectively with social media“* (p. 245).

It therefore comes natural to believe that the most effective communication is achieved through a successful merging of different strategies. Such a form of communication could be exemplified by a harmonious concert of both new and old media.

In general, communication is a fundamental activity when it comes to sport events. This can be easily explained by taking into considerations some of the basic characteristics of tourism products. Events, in general, and sport events, more specifically, are intangible services. Therefore, consumers cannot physically touch nor view them *prior* to consumption. Specifically, the value of a tourism or sport product is *“a function of the quality and quantity of experience they promise”* (MacCannell, 1976, cited in Standeven and DeKnop, 1999; p. 23). Not only that, but given that an event *“is always tangibly and experientially different”* (Getz, 2007; p. 19) from the previous ones: the experiences, psychological states and behaviors of the spectators will always differ from one event to the other. This, in turns, makes *“customer reviews”*, word of mouth and friends’ suggestions cardinal tenants when it comes to the attendance of these events by other people. In simpler words, sport events are experiences that can only be recalled and relished after the event has taken place; therefore, an effective communication is fundamental in making the customer believe that the experience they are paying for will be memorable. In this way, the marketer’s goal becomes making the customer believe that the event they

will attend will be “*unique*”, “*attractive*” and “*compelling*”: a “*once in a lifetime*” experience (Getz, 2007; p. 21).

### **2.6.1 Ticket Sales**

As previously mentioned, sport events need to be marketed as a “*once in a lifetime*” experience (Getz, 2007). Events themselves are “*temporal phenomena*”, meaning that they have a specific start and end date. The author, however, notes that the experience of an event starts previously to the actual “*consumption*” of the product. This means that the “*anticipation and recollection*” of the event is a fundamental experience. For this reason, marketers need to focus on involving the fan and on building awareness of an event before and after the event takes place (e.g. through regular and constant posting of content on the Facebook pages): the communication should encompass more than just the pursuit of ticket sales (Getz, 2007). Moriarty, Mitchell, & Wells (2009) agree with Getz’s thought and write that marketers and the marketing concept itself should focus on identifying the wants and needs of the customers in order to develop products and services that the customers really want, rather than selling products that the customers may not necessarily want. In addition, an effective operational management of events can create enjoyable experiences for fans, which, in turns, create opportunities for additional revenues (Zygband & Collignon, 2011). Finally, some organizers have decided to adopt a different technique: lowering ticket prices in order to give the opportunity to those with less affluence to attend certain games. For instance, the organizers of the FIFA World Cup in 2010 announced that the number of cheaper tickets for locals had risen from 10% to 29%, at a price of \$20 per ticket. Although this wasn’t a cheap price for the locals, it gave the chance to round 1 million South Africans to take part in the games watching (Clark, 2010). These new techniques highlight the importance of investing in attendance and atmosphere rather than in the mere sale of tickets.

### **2.6.2 People/fan involvement**

According to Ahonen & Moore (2005), cited in Zaglia (2012), the community activity “*is the biggest change in business in 100 years*” (p. 216): this short and to-the-point statement indicates how society has slowly moved from a more individualistic behavior of the person, to one that tends towards being involved in a “*community*”, to interaction and involvement.

According to Fill (2009), the traditional marketing mix has evolved and changes in dramatic ways. Since the days where most advertising was done through buying a few minutes on television, there has been a constant proliferation of media such as the Internet and audiences no longer seek for information in television or newspapers. Nowadays, there has been a shift in peoples' wishes: the audience doesn't want passive involvement anymore; they want to actively be part of the marketing and advertising process (Fill, 2009). And this change can easily be understood by looking at the evolvement of the marketing mix: the *medium* used to convey a *message* has now become more important than ever, even more important than the tool used to transmit it. At this point, one could ask themselves why has there been this shift to what we now call an "integrated marketing mix": a mix that facilitates the creation of both cognitive but also emotional responses to a message. While back in the day people could only "consume" an ad on television or they had to read a newspaper in order to be exposed to an advertisement, nowadays consumers can choose when to be exposed and how to consumer information, given the choice of media and leisure activities they have been given. The audience can now create its own content, especially through social media, in the form of music, video or simply text (Fill, 2009). Cheung and Lee (2010), agree with Fill (2009) and write that today, social networks allow people to interact in a written or visual form, or through videos and pictures. This, of course, happens amongst other interacting activities that characterize social networks.

As mentioned earlier, this new, more direct engagement of the audience in the communication and marketing processes of a brand or organization has shaped customer behavior itself. In fact, according to Moore (2007), people now utilize the media in order to satisfy four *additional needs* that were previously obscure to marketers, because not felt by consumers:

- To discover;
- To participate;
- To share;
- To express themselves

These needs clearly express the need for marketers to engage consumers in more interactive forms of communication than ever before: forms of communication

where the receiver himself is assigned a bigger and therefore more important responsibility in the decoding part of the communication process.

Today, consumers have been given the choice to involve family, friends and other people with the same interests in this content-creating process in order to get others' opinions, confront themselves, be able to proactively learn and always be up-to-date with the latest events, happenings, products and so on. This has therefore lead to a substantial change from an *intervention-based* marketing approach to a more *permission-based* one, where "*the focus is on communication with the members of an audience who have already expressed an interest in a particular offering*" (Fill, 2009, p. 21). This shift has made it possible to initiate a closer relationship with the audience (e.g. through short, friendly and conversational posts of Facebook) and engage in a more interactive communication.

For the more specific spectrum of sport events, the above defined shift in marketing communications makes it easier than ever to interact and involve fans in the marketing of these occurrences. However, the challenge still remains of how to most effectively and efficiently use the media we now have to successfully engage customers in an active communication.

### **2.6.3 Awareness Building**

Clearly, the goal for most marketers as well as event organizers is to be able to reach out to a wide audience during their events. In order to do so, marketers of a certain event need to raise awareness about it. Through online communities, marketers are able to influence the choices of group and especially to "*rapidly disseminate knowledge and perceptions regarding new products*" (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004, S. 241). Awareness building, in fact, is a fundamental activity when marketing online. Although this might not directly contribute to the revenue streams of a company, with a constant and well-targeted online communication, marketers will be able to slowly raise awareness and inform people about a certain product or service (Fill, 2009). Subsequently, the audience will either get directly involved in the trial of a specific service or it will decide that that service does not necessarily fulfill any of its needs (Kotler, Armstrong, Wong, & Saunders, 2008). In the case of sport, trying to raise awareness about a specific

event has become always more and more difficult especially because of globalization and the radical increase in competitiveness as the market isn't ruled by television or radio anymore: social networks, the mobile internet, online advertising and many other tools are now used to reach out to customers (Van Shaik, 2012). Clearly, raising awareness about a sport event is much easier when you are advertising directly to fans of a specific team or athlete involved in the event, as they will most likely already be informed about it and are more likely to participate (Van Shaik, 2012). However, the creation of *enduring relationships* with their audiences (Elliott, 2013) will allow marketers to reach customers at a deeper level (Van Shaik, 2012) and the vast amount of new media at their disposition gives them a chance to do so (Clow & Baack, 2010).

## **2.7 Event Tourism**

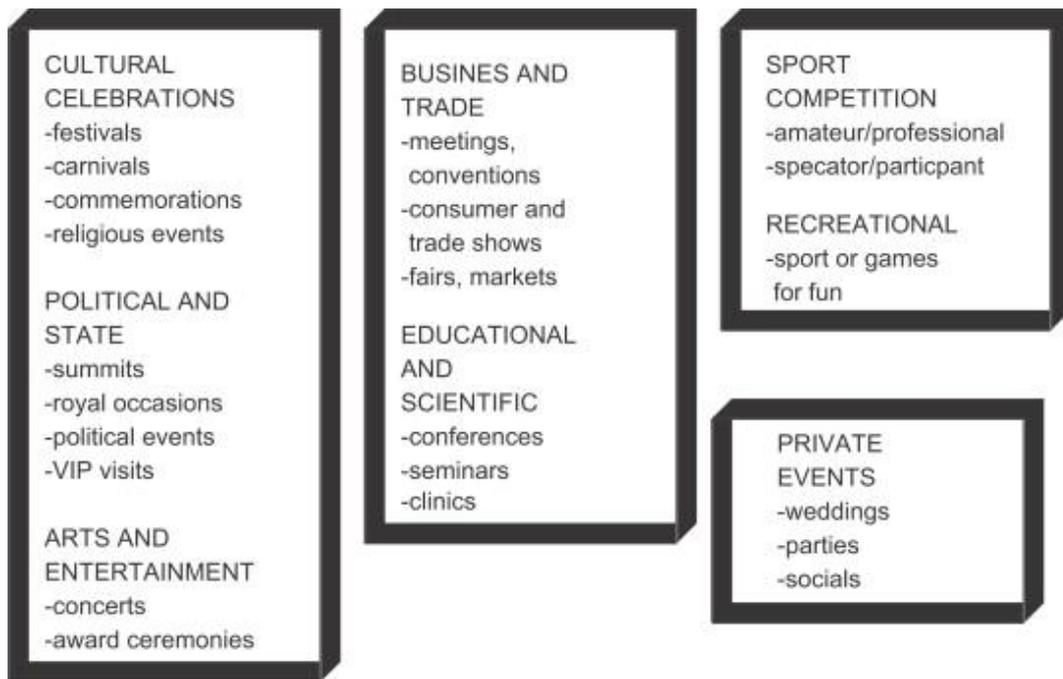
As Getz (2007) writes, the term 'event tourism' wasn't particularly common before 1987, when The New Zealand Tourist and Publicity Department coined the term and realized the importance of this growing market by stating: "*Event tourism is an important and rapidly growing segment of international tourism*" (p. 24).

Ever since, event tourism has become an important segment of the tourism industry and in order to define sport tourism, it is necessary to understand what researchers have defined as an "event". Much research has been done on this topic, and for the sake of consistency, not all theories will be written about in this chapter. Instead, Getz's "Event Studies" (2007) will be used as a fundament on which to build this paper's author's arguments.

Getz (2007, p. 18) defines an event as:

*"An occurrence at a given place and time; a special set of circumstances; a noteworthy experience"*.

Furthermore, according to Getz (2007), events can either be *planned* or *unplanned*. Sport events, are usually categorized as planned events, together with cultural celebrations, political events, art and entertainment events or business and educational events. For an overview of the different typologies of planned events, please refer to the table below.



**Figure D - Types of planned events (Source: Getz, 2007)**

A further classification of sport events tourism has been carried out by Standeven and DeKnop (1999), who diversify between those tourists who attend sport events merely as an audience and those who do so by actually taking part in them (e.g. through competing with other athletes). The research for this paper, however, focuses only on the first type of sport events, where the visitors are consumers that aren't directly involved in the event.

## **2.8 Sport Tourism**

According to Standeven and DeKnop (1999), *"a symbiotic relationship exists between sports and tourism"* (p. vii), this is due to the fact that while tourism is the world's largest industry, sport has gained international recognition since the 1960es and has attracted a large amount of fans, marketers, media and money ever since. Therefore, these two sectors can provide for and balance one another (Standeven & DeKnop, 1999).

Many studies (e.g. Glyptis, 1982; Gammon, 2002 et al.) have also been conducted on the nature and different types of sport tourism. Throughout these studies, many categorizations of sport tourism have been given and Weed and Bull (2004) gave a broader and more encompassing subdivision for sport tourism:

1. *Tourism with sport content* – this being a type of sport tourism where the major goal of the visit to a certain destination does not necessarily have to be the primary motivator for such a visit, rather an alternative activity (e.g. going to the local indoors swimming pool due to bad weather);
2. *Sport participation tourism* – this type of tourism simply involves the participation of the spectators in the sport activities;
3. *Sports training* – this sport tourism type refers to visits paid to a specific location due to the training facilities it offers;
4. *Sports events* – this is the form of sport tourism this paper focuses on and it refers to the tourism which purpose is to either view or take part in a specific sport event;
5. *Luxury sports tourism* – this type of tourism does not refer to a specific sport activity or motivator, rather, it refers to the quality and the luxury of the trip.

(Weed and Bull, 2004, p. 123)

In turn, sport events can be categorized according to their form and function (Getz, 2007) or their size (Standeven and DeKnop, 1999).

## **2.9 Events and Sports**

According to a study commissioned by Lagardère Unlimited and carried out by Zygband and Collignon (2011), the worldwide sports event market was worth €45 billion in 2009 and has been growing ever since. Overall, in May 2012, the whole sports industry was worth between €350 and €450 billion, including different income sources such as the construction of infrastructure, other sporting goods, different licensed products and, naturally, sport events (Zygband & Collignon, 2011). According to this same study, as of 2009, the soccer market was worth €16 billion alone in Europe. Below, you can see a graph that displays the different worths of sports in the worldwide sports events market as of 2009. Soccer is ranked first, owning 43% of the sports event market, followed from a distance by U.S. football and baseball.

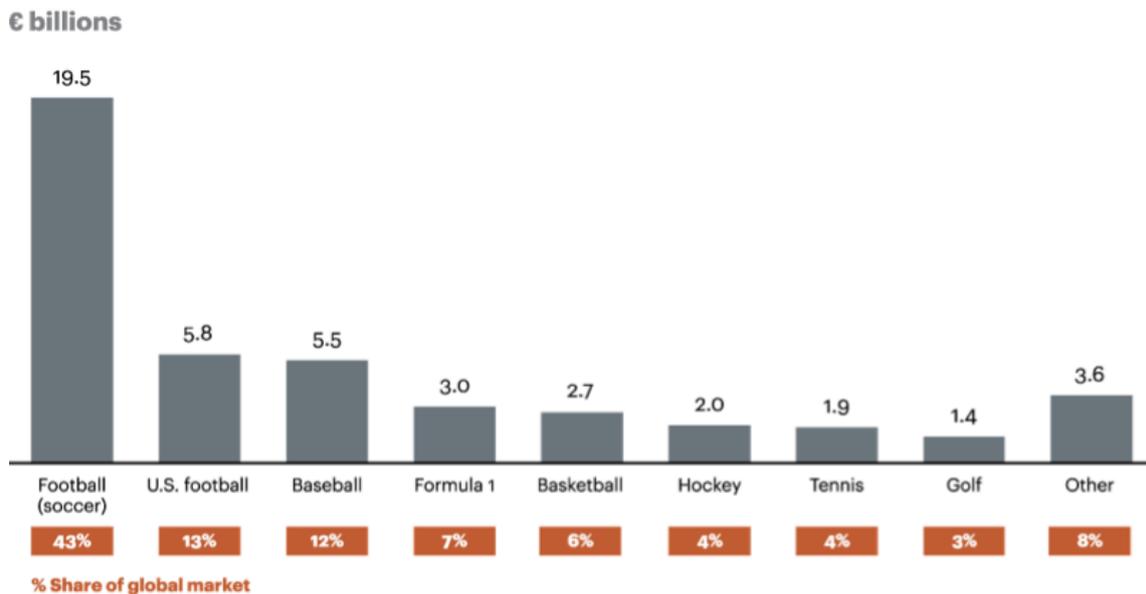


Figure E - Worldwide sports events market in 2009 (Source: Zygband & Collignon, 2012)

Another interesting finding brought forward by Zygband and Collignon (2012) is that in the so-called BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and also in more developed markets of Europe and North America, the sports industry’s growth is exceeding the GDP growth of the countries themselves.

It therefore becomes clear that the sports market is an ever-growing field, where marketers and organizations can leverage the commitment of fans and their involvement in order to promote a specific event. Clearly, the size and regularity (Standeven & DeKnop, 1999) of an event has a significant influence on the impact of the event on the country’s or region’s economy (Zygband & Collignon, 2011). Therefore, academics such as Standeven and DeKnop (1999) have differentiated events according to their scale. These differentiations can be carried out with a variety of methods, the main one being a cost-benefit analysis. However, each method has its limitations in measuring the non-monetary profits of an event. Nonetheless, for the sake of consistency, these methods won’t be analyzed in this chapter.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, according to Standeven and DeKnop (1999), events can be categorized in three major groups by size:

1. Mega Sport Events
2. Intermediate Sport Events

### 3. Smaller Sport Events

The best examples for Mega Sport Events could be the Olympic Games, the Super Bowl or the FIFA World Cup. These events are usually always a major tourism attraction (Ritchie, 1984, cited in Standeven & DeKnop, 1999) and the spending for them is very high. For the 2008 Beijing Olympics, around \$43 billion were spent and the 2012 London Olympics saw expenditures of almost \$20 billion (ODA, 2012). Getz (2007) uses a different terminology and defines these mega events as “hallmark events. An intermediate event is an event of smaller scale than a mega event; with also substantially smaller expenditures and visitor spend. Smaller scale events are, according to Standeven and DeKnop (1999), the events with the smallest impact on an area’s economy and a relatively small amount of visitors. However, the regularity of events such as the monthly/yearly repetition of a smaller event in a location, contribute substantially to the region’s revenues (Standeven & DeKnop, 1999). Higham (1999), cited in Gibson, Willming, & Holdnakc (2003), argues that hallmark (or mega) events are often the cause of major challenges for destinations and says that smaller-scale-events might therefore have a more positive impact on the community where they take place.

#### **2.10 Sports as a social phenomenon**

Online forums and social platforms offer a variety of opportunities for marketers to engage, cooperate and develop active relationships with customers (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004). Sport events, being a social phenomenon, offer itself as a perfect occurrence to be discussed and analyzed on such platforms. Most commonly, users decide to join online groups because they want to participate and receive information that satisfies their needs (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004). Clearly, users join certain online communities because they share a specific interest with its members, and consider the opinions of their “online-peers” as objective and, therefore, valuable (Wu, Chen, & Chung, 2010; cited in Zaglia, 2012). Upon this thought, is based the “*social identity theory*” discussed by Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006), which states that belonging to a virtual community makes its members feel connected to one another, while distancing themselves from other non-members. Two of the many outcomes derived from being part of a virtual group are now clear: community building and a feeling of belonging (Algesheimer et al. 2005; cited in Zaglia, 2012). Also Getz (2007) states that events, whether

planned or unplanned, have a community-building role. He also adds: *“every nation and community needs its celebrations, events that generate pride and a sense of belonging, and which build development capacity through volunteering, capital investments and improved marketing”* (p. 40).

In addition, sport – and sport events in particular – are underpinned by interest, excitement and an active fan involvement, which is clearly shown by how cinemas, open-air screens and other venues are increasingly broadcasting live sport events in order to make it possible also for those who can’t or won’t purchase a ticket to see a match or a game (Clark, 2010). Events are also characterized by different shared rituals and traditions, through which members of a community are able to assign a special significance to what they experience within a community and communicate this both to inside and outside the group (Casaló, Flavián, & Guinalú, 2008; cited in Zaglia, 2012).

As Van Shaik (2012) writes, people love to interact and engage with anything that they perceive as significant on an emotional level. Sports certainly fall into this category, as *“they allow you to feel real emotional investment in something that has no actual real-world consequences”* (Sternbergh, 2011). Sport fans identify with their team to the point where they say; *“we”* won, although they didn’t actually win. As a matter of fact, fans perceive themselves as being an *“integral part”* of their favorite team. This is due to the support and commitment they showed through time and to their need for *“social recognition”* (Van Shaik, 2012). Surely, emotionality is one major player in a fan’s life: fans *“attend games, they buy apparel, they live and die with each pitch, pass or shot”* (Burke, 2012; p. 1).

### **3 Methodology**

To investigate the research question, both a content analysis and a netnographic approach were chosen because of the qualitative advantages these methods yield (Mayring, 2000 and Kozinetz, 2002, cited in Zaglia, 2012).

Facebook has been considered as a highly eligible platform for this study, given its popularity, internationality (Zaglia, 2012) and the presence of a wide number of fan-page to which free access is given. Another valuable platform for this study, with slightly different communication goals – given by its micro-blogging

opportunities – has been chosen to be Twitter. Both these social networks give a chance to marketers to directly interact with their audience and they also make it possible for the customers to communicate with each other.

In order to be able to choose the right companies and correlated fan-pages, the author narrowed down the large number of sport event pages present on facebook and focused only on intermediate-scale sport events in Austria. These being:

- *Vienna Masters*
- *Ironman Austria*
- *Surf Worlcup*
- *Air & Style*

Thus, the sample within Facebook and Twitter builds on a scan of four intermediate-size events taking place on a yearly basis in Austria. For all selected events, appropriate Facebook fan-pages exist. However, the Twitter accounts are only actively used by Vienna Masters, Air and Style and the Surf Worldcup.

<b>Facts</b>	<b>Vienna Masters</b>	<b>Ironman Austria</b>	<b>Surf Worldcup</b>	<b>Air and Style</b>
<b>Location</b>	Vienna, Austria	Klagenfurt, Austria	Podersdorf, Austria	Innsbruck, Austria
<b>Frequency</b>	Yearly	Yearly	Yearly	Yearly
<b># of participants</b>	30	2.000	84	44
<b># of visitors</b>	~ 38.000	~ 35.000	~100.000	~60.000
<b>Facebook page (yes/no)</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b># of Facebook likes</b>	2.506	6.751	22.436	29.768
<b>Age groups on Facebook</b>	18-24 year olds	25-44 year olds	18-34 year olds	18-24 year olds
<b>Twitter account (yes/no)</b>	YES	YES	YES	YES
<b># of Twitter followers</b>	39	222	67	2.652
<b># of Tweets</b>	138	47	1.597	1.395
<b>Active/Inactive Twitter accounts</b>	Active	Inactive	Active	Active

Table 1 – Events’ Figures (Sources: Facebook.com; Twitter.com; Viennamasters.at; surfworldcup.at; air-style.com; ironmanklagenfurt.com)

In order to be able to give the reader a general overview of the size of the events selected for this paper, the author created a table including all the important quantitative data for the content analysis and netnography.

### 3.1 Content analysis

The objective of content analysis is to qualitatively analyze all types of recorded communication such as interviews’ transcripts, online communication, reports, conferences and other documents. Content analysis can also be conducted for non-written materials such as videotapes (Mayring, 2000). The author of this paper, however, only conducted qualitative content analysis for written text of online communication. By definition, content analysis is an empirical, controlled and methodological approach of texts “*within their context of communication, following*

*content analytical rules and step-by-step models, without rash quantification*” (Mayring, 2000, p. 2). Content on the Facebook fan-pages was analyzed through *external observation* of the types of content uploaded and on the consequences and responses it provoked in the members and also through a *direct interaction* with certain members on the page.

## **3.2 Netnography**

A netnographic research consists mainly in the observation of the interaction and communication between members of a group/page etc. (Zaglia, 2012). The presented analysis is based on the observation and interaction with fans of the four chosen Facebook pages. The netnographic study includes over 100 discussion threads over 1 month. However, none of the posts showed a particular interactivity, with the longest thread being of only 20 comments. The most plausible reasons for this relatively low interactivity will be discussed in the conclusion.

According to Kosinetz (2002), cited in Zaglia (2012), there are certain questions that a researcher needs to pose themselves when conducting a netnographic research in order to establish the significance of the communities analyzed. Some of these questions are: *“is the segment focused and relevant to the research question? Is the activity within the community high?”*. Following this approach, the author identified the Vienna Masters Facebook page as the least significant one amongst the events taken into account, given the low interaction of members both with the page admins and with one another.

# **4 Results**

## **4.1 Overall findings**

This chapter of the paper will focus on the findings that the author was able to retrieve through the above-defined qualitative research methods: content analysis and netnography.

### **4.1.1 Content Analysis**

*Facebook*

The content analysis yielded similar results throughout the different pages. Most of the organizations tend to upload similar content on their pages, this being: photos, written text, question polls and videos. Photos and videos are the most commonly shared content. Most of the text is written in English in the Vienna Masters and Air & Style pages, while the other two use predominantly German to communicate with their fans. A significant difference identified by the author is the *frequency* of content upload. While all pages are being uploaded on a daily basis during the actual taking place of the events, only a few were regularly enriched with content also before and after the actual events happened. The constant upload of content is a technique predominantly used to maintain fans involved also when this does not directly contribute to the revenue streams of the events through ticket sales. However, it is also to be noted that the content posted over a month after the occurrence of the event received very little attention from the fans. For instance, in the Vienna Masters page, some pictures uploaded during the event received as much as 313 likes and almost 30 shares, while the seldom-posted content a few months after the event took place (apart from being in the form of written text) only got a maximum of 27 likes and 2 shares. Rather, some pages chose this approach in order to enhance fan involvement and to gain information such as the preferred dates for the next event to take place or to know which location was the favorite amongst participants during the last event. For instance, the Air and Style page admins uploaded a poll asking: *“the season is slowly coming to an end. Surely you had a great time on the mountains, but which terrain park was your favorite this season? We already entered you a few options but feel free to add your park to the vote”* and received over 200 responses (Figure G, Appendix). This clearly shows a willingness of the fans to be more directly involved, to engage and to gain social acceptance through the approval of other members (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004). As an example, in the Surf Worldcup page, different discussions arose in form of fans-posted content concerning the music that was played during the event. Given that music is a significant part of the Surf Worldcup, as people enjoy to party next to the stages in between one contest and another, it doesn't surprise that this was a main topic amongst members. In all related discussions, different “sub-groups” created amongst the fans that were openly supporting the opinions of those whom they better identified themselves with. In addition, the author observed a difference when it came to allowing fans to post content directly

on the page: while all other pages allowed it, Ironman Austria didn't allow for content to be posted by others. This could signify the willingness to keep a specific track in the discussion that develops on the page through having a more direct control over the posted content. However, such an approach might lessen the opportunities to develop a dialogue and to build interaction with the fans.

### *Twitter*

Out of all four events, Vienna Masters, Air & Style and Surf Worldcup are actively using their Twitter accounts. However, Vienna Masters (VM) uses it significantly less as compared to Air & Style (AS) or the Surf Worldcup (SW): while VM posts an average of 2 tweets per week, AS and SW post daily. However, all Twitter accounts are linked to the Facebook pages; therefore, whatever is posted on Facebook will automatically appear on the Twitter accounts as well. This means that neither company posts original content targeted to a micro-blogging audience on their Twitter accounts, which causes their respective Twitter influence to be very low. In fact, almost no conversation threads with the followers appeared on the Twitter accounts. However, the VM account appeared to have a more "personal touch" to it, by not only tweeting content that was directly linked with their Facebook fan page, but also to the personal account of the organizers of the event itself, who often wrote about personal opinions and updates not directly related to the horseback riding industry. Nonetheless, also this approach didn't create much of an interaction with followers.

Overall, the pages were all targeting a slightly different market and showed different communication goals (see Table 2) through posting certain content. The communication on the Vienna Masters page is mainly targeted to an audience expert about horseback riding. In general, this event page shows more information posted in a factual manner about the event results (rankings, statistics...), predominantly during the actual taking place of the event, rather than content aimed to involve the fans in a discourse. As for the Ironman page, the admins post content mainly in form of pictures, and clearly target an expert market by often posting about technicalities. The communication goals for this event are partly aimed at people involvement and ticket sales. For instance, the Ironman page was one of the only ones who directly posted about where people can buy the last tickets for the event by attaching a link to the related post. The Surf Worldcup page

is targeted at a much younger audience and is the page that shows posting of the most “personalized” content: an Instagram account is also linked to the page, in order to be able for the admins to post “real-time” and “on-the-field” content while the event is taking place. In general, this page actively tries to raise awareness about Surfing and to educate the public on the different disciplines in which contestants compete at the Worldcup, such as windsurfing, kite surfing and tow-in. The Surf Worldcup page also shows the most diversified content: ranging from magazines articles, advertisements where young athletes are portrayed on their surfboards, interviews of both fans and athletes, information about music bands performing, information about festivals, sponsors’ products that they invited visitors to try at the event (e.g. Red Bull’s App – Figure H, Appendix) and so on. This mix of content posted gives the chance for admins to target different audiences: fans of one specific athlete, people who are going to the event mainly for the music or those who want to learn more about the sports. The fan excitement and involvement on this page is certainly more tangible than on others. However, also on the Ironman and Vienna Masters pages many fans replied to the posts with comments such as *“I can’t wait to be there”* or *“already excited!”* (Figure N and Figure O, Appendix). In this way, the pages very likely contribute to the revenue streams of the event without directly advertising the sale of tickets. In a similar way, also the Air & Style company page regularly posts a variety of content, often sharing posts from related pages such as the World Rookie Tour’s, a page for the largest international youth snowboard series. Where this page differs from the others is in posting “riddles” that the fans can solve in order to win tickets to the event. This approach showed high customer interaction and it didn’t reach only the *“organic audience”* represented by the fans who directly like the page, but also a *“viral audience”*, as many fans shared the posts and they therefore appeared on the walls of the fans’ friends.

As for the Twitter accounts, they didn’t demonstrate any particular influence on customers’ decisions as no conversation threads developed with the followers.

#### **4.1.2 Netnography**

##### *Facebook*

As stated before, people interaction on the chosen fan pages isn't particularly high. This might be due to the fact that all fans have different reasons for liking the page such as keeping up to date with the athletes' progress, get opinions and information from their peers, find out about programs, find out more about the sport and so on. This, in turn, might be caused by the different levels of expertise that fans have in the related sport and to the fact that fan pages on Facebook are open communities that anyone can join: they are not specific groups where members are particularly passionate about one subject. This heterogeneity in the fan's interests might be the cause for unfocused conversations and little to almost no dialogue development.

However, the author noticed that the developed conversation threads contribute significantly to uniting the different fans. In all four pages, people did not systematically refuse neither to comment nor interact. However, in order for the threads to develop, admins had to post content that was directly addressed to the fans. Yet, on the Ironman page, the interaction was slightly different than on other pages, with people being more engaged when it came to technicalities posted. For instance, when the Ironman page admins posted the picture of a professional bike with the corresponding information, a thread of over 20 comments developed amongst fans who were trying to find out whether the bike *"is worth the money"* *"what are its down pits"* or *"what was the original price for the bike"* (Figure J, Appendix). This interaction clearly supports Dholakia's et al. (2004) theory, according to which people often join groups to fulfill determined needs and to retrieve information, which they consider more valuable when coming from their peers.

Some communication threads also showed an emotional involvement between certain fans. For example, when the Surf Worldcup page posted a video interview with the known surfer Austin Flash (Figure K, Appendix) and a fan made a derogatory comment about the interviewee, many different fans agreed with the comment and showed emotionality and community building in disagreeing with the admins. Nonetheless, the posts that showed the most interaction between fans, were the ones that were directly addressed to them e.g. through a question. The author sees this as a necessity for the individuals to get socially recognized by the others and to find members who share the same idealized goals.

Events	Main Observed Communication Goal(s)	Targeted Audience
On Facebook Fan Pages		
Vienna Masters	Factual Information Communication	Expert Audience
	Ticket Sales	
Ironman Austria	Technical Information	Expert Audience
	Ticket Sales	
Surf Worldcup Podersdorf	Fan Interaction	Wider Audience
	Awareness Building	
Air & Style	People/Fans Interaction	Wider Audience

**Table 2 - Main observed Communication Goals on Facebook Fan Pages**

### *Twitter*

As for the Twitter accounts, none of them were subject to a high people interaction. In fact, only a few tweets were “retweeted” or “favored” by the followers of that account. As stated before, this might be due to the fact that the Twitter content isn’t authentic, as it is mostly linked directly to the Facebook posts. As a matter of fact, the Facebook and Twitter audiences differ drastically: while one post on Facebook might appear on one’s timeline hours after it has been posted, Twitter uses a newsfeed that is strictly linked to the time at which a tweet was sent. In fact, a tweet will only be visible on one’s timeline for a few minutes, until the other followed users will post more content. Therefore, tweets need to be catchy and specifically targeted at a micro-blogging audience.

#### **4.1.3 Community building and people interaction**

In order to understand how the community-building role of social networks analyzed by different authors (e.g. Dholakia et al., 2004; Wu et al., 2010; Van Shaik, 2012) works, it is fundamental to see how members of a community interact and how the dialogue between them develops. In order to do so, the author used a netnographic approach to analyze four different Facebook fan pages of the events described above.

Although in most of the pages chosen there weren’t particularly long threads, the author was still able to see a significant fan involvement and interaction amongst

group members. Most of the engagement was initiated by the content posted directly by the page admins, as compared to the content posted by the fans. Surely, community building showed to be a visible result from the online interaction. As a matter of fact, when commenting or responding to a post almost all fans of the page used mainly the pronoun “we”, identifying themselves with the other fans. Another significant community-building process observed was the tendency for fans of a certain athlete or horseback rider to support each other in case of loss. The page where this type of behavior was particularly common was in the “Ironman Austria” one. This might be due to the fact that the number of athletes participating in the Ironman is much higher than those of the contestants in other competitions. Specifically, shortly after almost half of the final running phase of the Ironman, one contestant hurt his leg and was unable to continue competing. His fans showed their support on the athlete’s page but also on the Ironman page and a high level of support emerged amongst fans when they commented with lines such as “*we all hope he will get better soon*”, “*he is a great athlete, and we are all with him*”, “*he did such a good job until almost the end! Next year he’ll rock it!*” and so on. Contrary to what Sternbergh (2011) or Van Shaik (2012) write, for this triathlon competition, the „defeated fans“ did not show any signs of aggressiveness nor did the „winners“ brag about their preferred athlete winning. Instead, they showed a particularly high degree of positive interaction and support, which, in turn, lead to the building of a community feeling. This is a perfect example to show how one of the main reasons for people to join a community (the fulfillment of one’s immediate needs through retrieval of information) is transcended by a deeper, more intimate wish to be part of a group and to identify oneself with it. Members of the Ironman community showed the development of relationships lead by affect and support: they reinforced one another. This goes along with Dolakia’s et al. (2004) theory that members of a group often go beyond „*the immediate utilitarian purpose of a particular interaction*“ (Dholakia, Bagozzi, & Klein Pearo, 2004, p. 245).

#### **4.1.4 Dialogue Development**

Throughout the analysis of the content posted on the Facebook pages and through the observation of people’s behavior on these online communities, the author was able to retrieve significant information regarding the different dialogues developed amongst fans. In fact, the communication goals of the different pages brought to

the creation of different dialogues (e.g. comment threads) amongst people. Some pages, like the Ironman one, are focused more on the transmission of technical information; while others, such as the Air and Style one, want to engage fans on a more personal level. This is done in order to develop a dialogue that keeps the person constantly engaged. The Air and Style and Surf Worldcup pages both offer content that is easy to follow (e.g. pictures or one-liners – Figure L, Appendix) and that contains certain emotional elements. By using content that has an emotional feel to it, the page admins made it more feasible for fans to engage in conversations and to follow them (Cohn, 2010). The Vienna Masters page is targeted more at an expert audience and isn't particularly active in trying to develop a dialogue with the public. Therefore, this is the page that appears to have the shortest dialogue threads. The Surf Worldcup page showed the most promotion of its sponsors. Posts promoting sponsors didn't particularly help the development of a dialogue, as people were more prone to simply "like" the post. However, this page also focused a lot on engaging the fans and learning from them. For instance, the admins did so through questionnaires (Figure I, Appendix). These, in turn, made it possible for the fans to discuss their differing answers that gave a chance to the marketers to understand the fans' different opinions also from a qualitative point of view instead of from a mere questionnaire. The Air and Style page showed to be particularly efficient in trying to keep the public involved and to develop a dialogue, even if just a short one. The page admins did so by posting mixed content (e.g. text and photo) and directly asking the audience a question such as "*can you find Travis Rice in this picture?*" (Figure M, Appendix). Overall, however, the posts that created the most dialogue were the ones that directly interested the fans such as a video where visitors were included, the victory of their favorite athlete or a specific event they were interested in attending, such as a concert taking place at the event.

## **5 Discussion and Conclusion**

This study demonstrates the existence of different levels of effectiveness in the marketing of sport events, according to the communication goals a Facebook fan page tries to achieve through the upload of different content. On fan pages, individuals interact in many different ways, according to the stimuli provided by the content uploaded. This content can either be aimed at the mere sale of tickets, or the involvement of people and the building of awareness on a specific sport/event.

Amongst fans, feelings of belonging, consciousness of kind and a willingness to interact and be involved in some aspects of the event emerged clearly.

Fan pages showed to have the ability to achieve different goals through the uploaded content. However, some pages produced tediousness in the upload of the same content, which didn't stimulate dialogue development or interaction amongst fans. Surely, important factors to take into account when posting content appeared to be the degree of control the admins want to have over the communication goal, the level of credibility they wish to transmit, the type of dialogue they want to see develop, the audience they want to target and the geographic dispersion of the audience. This last factor is of particular importance when they are trying to use Twitter as marketing tool. In fact, the number of Twitter users in Austria is much lower than that of, for example, the United States (Twitter.com, 2013). For this reason, it is important to consider whether this platform actually is a valuable medium to reach a communication goal.

Overall, fan pages appeared to be online platforms where marketers could get suggestions from fans related to the events and where awareness could be built about related sport events. This can be mainly achieved through others' sharing of content, as the audience reached increases drastically when fans share the content with their friends who aren't direct fans of the page.

However, the fan page seemed to embody only a weak form of people engagement and dialogue development. This might be due to the heterogeneity of the reasons as to why people join the community. This opens a room for further studies comparing the effectiveness of marketing on fan pages as compared to closed groups, where people join because of a strong interest in the subject. Overall, the feeling of community belonging didn't show to be particularly salient on the fan page. Nonetheless, fan pages showed to be a space where effective marketing can be developed, as long as the fan is kept involved and regularly updated, as a feeling of belonging to a certain community showed to be one important factor for people to join the page.

Some particularly efficient marketing techniques on social media have shown to be the direct involvement of people, by asking them to share their opinions and experiences by engaging them in discussions. These, in turn, give marketers a

chance to further improve their communication efficacy. Surely, capturing a fan’s attention showed not to be particularly time-consuming nor complex. Marketers can simply send a tweet or share a post in order to make fans understand that their contributions are valuable and their involvement is appreciated. In fact, it obviously appeared that fans do not always tend to connect to a specific event through the athletes they like, but also through online social communication with their peers.

Given the social aspect of sport events, it often is that supplementary experiences are even more important than the actual event itself. Therefore, the advantage of social networks is that they quest an undeniable deep social desire for people to be part of a group and they make it easier than ever to reach out to certain fan groups. All the same, with the growing number of competitors and channels through which people can be reached, it becomes always more and more difficult to engage fans in conversations. Nowadays, connecting postulates the building of stronger, enduring relationships and more interaction with “hyper-connected” (Elliott, 2013) consumers. Social media marketing campaigns need to be addressed from a psychological angle, which allows marketers to see how consumers respond both to the event as a product and to the marketers themselves, as people.

	Media	Purpose	Example
Within the scope of this study	Facebook	Dialogue development	E.g. asking questions, requesting feedback...
	Twitter	Short text updates	E.g. publishing scoreboards, event-related news...
Not within the scope of this study	Instagram	Image updates	E.g. posting pictures of athletes in action, of visitors...
	YouTube	Video support for other media platforms	E.g. uploading videos of competitions, interviews...
	<b>Other new media platforms as is deemed appropriate for the specific sport event</b>		

**Integrated new media marketing**

Figure F - Integrated New Media Marketing

As indicated in figure F, an effective new media campaign is one that *integrates all channels*, thereby engaging with all different types of new media consumers in a holistic manner. For instance, the Vienna Masters page could post profiles of the horses and the riders on Facebook in order to provide background information of the participants and therefore build an emotional connection between the athletes and the consumers. Once this emotional association has been made, Twitter can be used to post the results of the races.

The concept of an integrated marketing communication has been accepted both in academia and in practice. It is therefore logical to assume that the same model for new media would receive favorable response amongst marketers and consumers alike.

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## 7 Appendix



Figure G - Facebook's Growth in the Past Year (Source: Techcrunch)



**Table 3 - Vienna Masters Facebook Statistics (Source: Facebook.com)**



**Table 4 - Iron man Facebook Statistics (Source: Facebook.com)**



**Table 5 - Surf Worldcup Statistics (Source: Facebook.com)**



**Table 6 - Air & Style Facebook Statistics (Source: Facebook.com)**

Air & Style Company asked a question.  
May 15

The season is slowly coming to an end. Surely you had a great time on the mountains, but which terrain park was your favorite this season? We already entered you a few options but feel free to add your park to the vote.



**Figure H - Air & Style Poll**

 Surf Worldcup Podersdorf  
May 3

Zwei Wochen Surf-Action machen Lust auf mehr! Check dir die kostenlose Red Bull Playgrounds App und entdecke die Surf- und Wakeboard-Spots in deiner Nähe!  
<http://bit.ly/WT1RZ7>

**THIS IS  
MY  
PLAY-  
GROUND**



Like · Comment · Share



Figure I - Surf Worldcup Sponsor's promotion

 Surf Worldcup Podersdorf asked a question.  
March 28

Warum komme ich zum Surf Worldcup nach Podersdorf?

- Wegen der Surfactionr und dem dazugehörigen Beach Feeling +15
  - Musik, Partys, Live Acts +7
  - Wegen der Ruhe und des schönen Ausblicks ;-)) +2
  - Weil ich da viele meiner Freunde treffe und abhängen kann +1
- + Add an answer...

Like · Comment · Share



Figure J - Surf Worldcup's Questionnaire

IRONMAN Austria Timeline Now Like

– ab September 2009 im Keller (Weniskusschauer)  
 – Schaltung: Ultegra  
 – Rahmenhöhe: S (50)  
 – Sattel: Selle Italia  
 ... See More



Like · Comment · Share 20 7 1

20 people like this.

**Michael Rocky** Wie viel hats original gekostet? Bib zz. An nem bmc tm für 2k dran  
 Like · Reply · 1 · April 30 at 1:01pm

**Franz Miklautz** Wie es hier beschrieben ist, hat es 4.100 Euro gekostet.  
 Like · May 3 at 10:38am

**Michael Rocky** Ist es das wert?  
 Like · May 3 at 1:02pm

Figure K - Iron Man's Bike Post

May 2, 2013 2:58pm  
 Back to Album Previous · Next



**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf**  
 Interview mit Flash!  
 Like · Comment · Share · May 2 via mobile

Title: May 2, 2013 2:58pm  
 Shared with: Public

**Philipp Grün** Sorry ich Präzisiere: weils eines so Sau dämlich is- hat genau nichts mit Surfen zu tun. Schad was aus den einst echt lässigen Weltcup in podo geworden ist.  
Like · Reply · May 2 at 4:20pm via mobile

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf** Lieber Philipp, weißt du, wer hier im Video zu sehen ist? Also, wenn Kitesurf-Legende Flash Austin in deinen Augen nichts mit Surfen zu tun hat, dann können wir dir leider auch nicht helfen. Du musst dir die Videos nicht anschauen – keiner zwingt dich!  
Like · 🍻 4 · May 2 at 4:27pm

**Philipp Grün** Mit dem Format könnt's echt zu ATV SNF gehen!  
Like · Reply · May 2 at 3:41pm via mobile

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf** Hi Philipp! Kannst du uns erklären, was dieses Video mit ATV Saturday Night Fever zu tun haben soll? Wir sehen keine betrunkenen Jugendlichen im Hintergrund, die Party machen. Keine Ahnung, was du damit meinst!  
Like · 🍻 1 · May 2 at 4:11pm

**Michael Humenberger** ah, jetzt sei mal nicht so streng, ist ja nur Spaß und die meisten schauen sichs schon gerne an!  
Like · Reply · 🍻 3 · May 2 at 4:22pm

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf** Jetzt kapieren wir es erst! Die wussten nicht wer Flash Austin ist. Okay, ist halt auch schon eine Zeit lang her. Flash war der erste Star der Kitesurfszene!!!  
Like · Reply · 🍻 1 · May 2 at 5:26pm

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf** Die Videos mit Niveau gibt es täglich um 23.00 auf ORF Sport+ und Online in der ORF TVThek unter Summer Opening!  
Like · Reply · May 2 at 3:21pm · Edited

**Dominik Zwetschkenröster** Sinnlosere videos könnt's nicht mehr machen oder  
Like · Reply · 🍻 1 · May 2 at 3:00pm via mobile

**Kathrin Wiesner** Feinster trockener Schmäh, jawohl!  
Like · Reply · May 2 at 4:38pm via mobile

Figure L - Surf Worldcup's Interview with Austin Flash

Like · Comment · Share  
👍 13 people like this.  
Write a comment...

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf** shared a link.  
May 23

Sehr geile Tow IN Action beim EFPT Tourstopp in Russland. Vor allem die Tricks bei kreuzendem Motorboot sind sehr geil!!!

**EFPT Aqualato CUP: Tow-in**  
Выступления райдеров в зрелищной дисциплине tow-in.

Like · Comment · Share  
👍 3 people like this.  
Write a comment...

**Surf Worldcup Podersdorf**  
May 23

Aktuelle News rund um`s Windsurfen findet ihr auch auf der Facebook Seite vom Surf Magazin!

Manche behaupten ja, dass der Surf Worldcup eine der größten Singlebörsen der Welt sei. Also, wer hat dieses Jahr beim Surf Worldcup eine neue Liebe gefunden?? Heraus mit der Wahrheit!! Wir wollen es wissen, ob dieses Gerücht auch wirklich stimmt!

Like · Comment · Share  
👍 35 people like this.  
Write a comment...

**Gotthard Gosi Singer** Es stimmt wirklich, ich habe die LIEBE zum kitesurfen entdeckt 🥰🥰🥰  
Like · Reply · 🍻 8 · May 24 at 10:55am via mobile

**Florian Lachauer** Besser wäre. Wie viele ungewollte Babys kommen 9 Monate nach dem WC zur Welt...  
Like · Reply · 🍻 5 · May 24 at 12:10pm

View 3 more comments

Figure M – Content posted on the Surf Worldcup Facebook page

20  
Air & Style Company Timeline Now



Like · Comment · Share 3

138 people like this.

 **Goran Markovic** at the bottom ridge, below the avalanche 😊  
Like · Reply · June 3 at 12:54pm

 **Niki Lee** yes, bottom left, centre of spine. Can see top half of figure!  
Like · Reply · 1 · June 3 at 12:57pm

 **Hugues Gcdc Beauchamp** At the bar. ✕  
Like · Reply · June 3 at 7:57pm

 **Rohan Haggart** no way  
Like · Reply · Tuesday at 9:21am

Figure N - Air and Style post

 **IRONMAN Austria** changed their cover photo.  
January 2



Like · Comment · Share 👍 349 💬 27 📄 74

👍 349 people like this.

 **Melissa Jewett** This is a great picture...  
June 18, 2012 at 10:10pm · Like

 **Marco Kisch** Wie geil !!!!!  
June 22, 2012 at 7:40am · Like · 👍 1

 **Bill Young** Fantastic.  
June 25, 2012 at 9:35am · Like

 **Hiroshi Usui** Not birds? Amazing!  
June 25, 2012 at 10:26am · Like

 **Anna Stamp** hold on – are they people??? looks like seals or dolphins or summat!  
June 25, 2012 at 11:48am · Like

 **Adriana Rondon** wuau, I like it!.  
June 29, 2012 at 2:19am · Like

---

 **Stefan Mikula** =Vorfreude 😊  
January 2 at 9:07pm via mobile · Like

 **Ramon Uldemolins** I was there. It was spectacular !!!!! ✕  
January 2 at 8:32pm via mobile · Like

 **David Powell** Mark Ponsford can't wait!  
March 7 at 10:05pm via mobile · Like · 👍 1

Figure O - Ironman Austria – Fans' excitement

Vienna Masters Timeline Now

Like · Comment · Share 145 4 29

Daniel Frühmann, Seb Kaltenbrunner, Kareem Kateb and 142 others like this.

**Conny Huett** ich bin schon so aufgeregt 😊  
September 15, 2012 at 1:13pm · Like · 5

**Stefanie Fink** Freu mi schon 😊  
September 15, 2012 at 1:46pm · Like

**Markus Fux** geilste location all over the world  
September 18, 2012 at 10:06pm · Like

**Christiane Stift** Und der Count Down rennt ins Ziel mit den starken motivierten Organisatoren! Wien soll sie beglückwünschen– ein Highlight in Österreich  
September 19, 2012 at 1:34am via mobile · Like · 2

Figure P - Vienna Masters - Fans' excitement

He's still in the lead but they are catching up. Marino Vanhoenacker cheered on by IRONMAN Austria Managing Director Helge Lorenz. (sj)



Like · Comment · Share

40 4

40 people like this.



**Paul Ingen** Come on Helge, bring your man home!!

October 14, 2012 at 1:37am · Like



**Be Iron Nicht mehr Leader!**

October 14, 2012 at 1:44am via mobile · Like



**Rozália László** Go Marino, go!

October 14, 2012 at 1:52am · Like

**Figure Q - Ironman Austria - Fans supporting an athlete**