



VICTORIAN SOARING ASSOCIATION WOMEN IN GLIDING MARKETING PLAN

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Executive Summary

The Victorian Soaring Association (VSA) aims to increase the participation of Women in Gliding (the WIG project).

The objective of this Marketing Plan (the plan) is to determine the best marketing activities to help realise this goal.

For the sake of this plan, the female population is split into two segments: females **with** gliding experience (segment 1) and females **without** gliding experience (segment 2). It is assumed that segment 1 represents the more fertile ground for recruitment and that it should therefore attract the lion's share of marketing activity. If and when further resources become available, attention can turn to the recruitment of segment 2.

The plan covers a wide range of marketing activities and, if resources and time were unlimited, it might be worth executing the full suite of suggested activities. However, resources are limited and as such it is important to select certain marketing activities on grounds of their 'value'. In order to determine value, a matrix has been employed that assesses each activity's likely impact against the money, resources and time it takes to implement that activity. Please note that I have used my ten years plus marketing experience to assign values to each activity.

The plan provides guidance and direction to the VSA over an unspecified period. Time to implement the plan is dependent upon available resources. Prior to the implementation of any suggested marketing activity, it is recommended that an individual activity plan be developed, to include such information as the activity's specific goals and objectives, target audience(s), budget and person/people responsible for its implementation and review.

The WIG Marketing Plan should be reviewed and refreshed regularly and the female recruitment expectations and the weight of emphasis on the different marketing activities adjusted accordingly. This will help ensure that the plan continues to encourage greater levels of female participation in gliding.

Background

Prior Knowledge

Females are significantly underrepresented in gliding. They currently make up just 6% of the VSA membership, which equates to 32 members. This male to female ratio is consistent across the country. Interestingly, females make up a very similar 7% of Motorcycling Victoria's overall membership.

A significant amount of research has been undertaken to identify the real or imagined barriers that reduce the participation of females in both informal and formal sporting activities. Peta Thomas, Manager Female Participation Program at Motorcycling Victoria, cites the following barriers as the main ones depressing female participation in the sport: a real or imagined 'danger factor'; relatively high costs involved and a perception that motorcycling is a boys' club. It is assumed that gliding suffers from similar perceived or real barriers to female participation.

To add depth to the WIG Marketing Plan, I have conducted telephone consultations with individuals from the following State Sporting Associations (SSA's):

- Yachting Victoria (Sam Watson, Club Development Manager)
- Biathlon Victoria (Emma Flanagan, Communications Officer)
- Motorcycling Victoria (Peta Thomas, Manager Female Participation Program)

Goals

The VSA aims to increase female membership by 5 members per year (TBC).

Assumptions

Little to no profiling has been performed on the current base of female gliders. We are therefore forced to make assumptions about the type of female that might be interested in gliding. For example, it might be assumed that females who have had direct or indirect exposure to gliding, or general aviation would be more likely to participate than females who have not had any prior exposure.

VSA SWOT Analysis

My analysis of the internal and external environment relevant to female participation in gliding reveals the following:

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Group of willing advocates for the sport▪ Existing strong sense of community▪ Organised SSA with access to funding▪ Gliding is fun, rewarding and proven to relieve stress▪ Precedents of successful female gliders	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Females lack confidence in associated skill set, such as map reading and orienteering▪ Fear of flying/association with high risk▪ Time constraints▪ Poor media coverage of female participation▪ Lack of strong (female) membership development programs▪ Social stereotyping – ‘boys’ club’▪ Financial barrier to entry
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Females with direct or indirect link to gliding▪ Leverage existing female gliders (stories, PR and mentoring)▪ Relatively cheap and proven online technology - online forums, direct email, new website▪ Work closely with National Sporting Organisation to develop ‘female divisions’ for all events▪ Study (online) opportunities for required skills▪ Clubhouse that can be used for social activities▪ AEFs provide realistic try before you buy opportunities	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Increasing family commitments▪ Economic downturn, people becoming increasingly conservative with discretionary spend▪ General decrease in VSA membership - acquisition and retention▪ Other state sporting associations, including alternative aviation options, competing for female participation▪ Trying to do too much too soon with limited resources

Proposed Marketing Activities

In order to develop an effective marketing plan comprising targeted strategies, it is helpful to drill down and loosely segment the general female population.

For the sake of this document, the female population will be segmented into females **with** gliding experience and females **without** gliding experience.

1. Females **with** gliding experience – active or lapsed.

To date, there has been little to no profiling of current female gliders. However, it is assumed that a proportion of female gliders had some form of link to gliding, aviation or engineering prior to becoming involved themselves. For example, they may be the partner, friend or family member of someone (male) who already participates. Alternatively, the female glider might work in aviation, or she may be the partner/friend/family member of someone who does.

2. Females **without** gliding experience:

- a) **with** the means to participate, but not participating due to lack of motivation and/or lack of awareness of the sport;
- b) **without** the means to participate.

It is assumed that the means to participate include such things as time, money and access to facilities.

A Value/Impact Matrix

The below matrix shows the relative value of an array of marketing activities in terms of their potential impact versus their cost; resource requirements (above and beyond time and money); and time required to implement. The value index is between 1 and 3, where 1 is the least valuable i.e. an activity that is expensive to implement would score a 1 in the 'cost' category.

Impact:

High
Medium
Low

Rating:

Each activity's rating is the sum of its 3 values for cost, resources and time. Ratings range between 3 and 9. I have only recommended activities that are likely to have a high impact AND represent good value.

Females with gliding experience

Activity	Impact	Cost	Resources	Time	Rating
Conduct focus groups to ascertain motivations for participating	High	3	2	2	7
Seek feedback from females with gliding experience via feedback forms, surveys etc. to ascertain motivations	High	3	3	3	9
Test various mediums to gauge communication preferences	Medium	2	1	1	4
Perform audit on existing marketing materials to ensure alignment with documented motivations	Medium	3	2	2	7
Develop new marketing that align with motivations. Potential materials - website, member/info. pack, social networking presence, e-newsletters, flyers, brochures etc.	High	1	1	1	3
Promote marketing materials via preferred communication mediums	High	3	3	3	9
Promote option of gliding via airline intranet sites	High	3	3	3	9
Target further funding grants to financially support female gliders (recreational & competitive)	Low	3	2	1	6
Promote existing calendar of female gliding events & activities	High	3	3	3	9
Develop additional female gliding events & activities	High	1	1	1	3

Activity	Impact	Cost	Resources	Time	Rating
Promote stories of successful female gliders – historical and contemporary		3	2	3	8
Promote female glider mentoring program		3	3	3	9
Member get member promotional activities		2	2	2	6
Develop activities to reengage lapsed gliders		2	2	3	7
Promote gliding tips by females for females		3	3	3	9

Recommended Marketing Activities

Seek feedback from females with gliding experience to ascertain motivations

The primary aim is to increase the number of females participating in gliding. The best way to do this is to determine the profile and motivations of females within segment 1. An interesting question to consider is whether this segment views gliding as a sport or a leisure/lifestyle activity. Answering this question will provide vital information about the best way to promote gliding to non-participating females.

Biathlon Victoria shared with me that the ‘fun factor’ is emphasised at all times when promoting the sport, especially to younger audiences.

Peta Thomas, Manager – Female Participation Program at Motorcycling Victoria, has established a consultative committee to assist with the organisation’s efforts to get to know their current and prospective female members better. The committee comprises Motorcycling Victoria members that represent a broad spectrum of perspectives. For example, 3 males and 8 females sit on the committee and most disciplines of motorcycling (motocross, dirt track etc.) are represented. The committee meets monthly and in the interim Peta leans on committee members for counsel and guidance. For example, Peta runs promotional messages and materials by the committee before ‘going live’.

In a further attempt to gather information on its current female membership, Motorcycling Victoria will soon issue members at all its clubs with a survey. The survey’s specific focus is female participation and it is intended for anyone (male or female) with experience in, or merely an opinion on, female participation in motorcycling.

In order to appeal to females who might not be interested in physically participating in their sport, Yachting Victoria’s female recruitment strategy places just as much emphasis on attracting females to become involved in the governance side of the sport, as it does on active participation. Currently, just one of the club’s nine board members is female. By increasing the number of female leaders, it is hoped that the knock-on effect will be an increase in females physically participating in sailing. Yachting Victoria’s ‘far-reaching’ aim is to have one female leader, or ‘Champion’, based at each of its clubs. A key responsibility of each leader will be to drive female participation in sailing.

Promote marketing materials via preferred communication mediums

More often than not, the first point of contact from interested parties is the internet; to this end, at least a basic web presence with up-to-date and easily searchable information is recommended.

Motorcycling Victoria has eight Facebook pages, one of which is dedicated specifically to its female audience. With 115 ‘likes’ at last count, Motorcycling Victoria’s female Facebook page is the third most ‘liked’ out of the eight. Similarly, in a bid to appeal directly to its female audience, Motorcycling

Victoria has a tab on its website specifically for females. It directs traffic to information that is directly relevant to current or prospect female members.

Sam Watson, Club Development Manager at Yachting Victoria, informed me that the Club no longer advertises via mass media. Indeed, Sam recently pulled an advert that was set to run in the *Herald Sun*. Rather, the Club's new advertising campaign focuses on local media in suburbs close to the water. In this way, two potential barriers to entry, namely access and time (to travel to the water), are removed. Similarly, Biathlon Victoria does not engage in mass marketing, but rather targets its most receptive female audience - rifle shooters. Biathlon Victoria does this by visiting rifle clubs in person and spruiking the sport to club managers and members.

Promote Female Glider Mentoring Program

In her *Teaching Women to Fly Research Project*, Dr. Penny Hamilton Ph.D, suggests the development and promotion of a 'no-cost, readily-available database of female mentors for female general aviation pilots-in-training'. This network could be promoted via airline intranet sites, aviation media and social networking sites, as well as to the current cohort of female gliders.

Promote Existing Calendar of Female Gliding Events and Activities

Females are social beings. It would obviously be worth proving this via qualitative research (see above), but it is likely that the social aspect of gliding would appeal to females. The provision of information about existing events, such as the annual Australian Women in Gliding week, and networking opportunities is strongly recommended.

Motorcycling Victoria recently enjoyed success using Direct Mail to promote a motorcycle event to females. When female registrations for the Hattah Desert Race (an event that takes place annually in July) were too low to support a female class, a direct mail piece, containing information about the race, was mailed to Motorcycling Victoria's database of 200 female license holders (both current and lapsed). The campaign led to a further 9 female registration, thus meeting the minimum requirement for a female class. There has already been media interest in the first female class to ever participate in the race.

Promote Gliding Tips from Females for Females

Teaching Women to Fly highlights the following barrier: 'Instructor-Student communication compatibility (Mars vs. Venus)'. The paper also notes the following barriers pertaining to females: 'personal lack of confidence in their ability and a "fear of flying"; 'lack of map reading experience & orienteering skills sets'; 'lack of experience with and knowledge of mechanical systems' and 'flight schools perceived as indifferent to female students'¹.

Providing gliding tips developed by females, for females, would help overcome the misconception that skills, necessary for successful and safe gliding, sit outside the female realm. Similarly, the provision of female instruction options and, what Dr. Penny Hamilton calls "Female Friendly Flight Training", would assist in remedying this issue². Dr. Hamilton goes onto to suggest that females would benefit from the provision of 'self-study options...To solve the lack of map reading and orienteering skills, offer interesting no cost ways to learn'³. In this way, females interested in participating in gliding can build their skill set and confidence and receive instruction in a style that suits their needs. An example of gliding tips for females (by females) is included – see appendix 1.

¹ *Teaching Women to Fly Project*, Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D. More information on this research project can be found at www.teachingwomentofly.com.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

Females without gliding experience

- **with** means to participate, but not participating due to lack of motivation and/or lack of awareness of the sport;
- **without** means to participate

For the sake of this exercise, only females **with** the means to participate will be considered.

Activity	Impact	Cost	Resources	Time	Rating
Conduct focus groups to gauge how segment responds to/how much they know about gliding		3	3	2	<u>8</u>
Develop communication and media plan aimed at addressing knowledge/motivation gaps, as identified by research		1	1	1	3
Approach competitor set to establish relationship and investigate opportunities for promotion of gliding in their newsletters, bulletin boards, events etc.		3	2	2	7
Identify community events in affluent suburbs and investigate promotional opportunities		2	1	1	4
Provide come and try opportunities		3	3	3	<u>9</u>
Develop social media channels and investigate methods to introduce social marketing as promotional channel		3	1	2	6
Provide option of instruction by females, and/or range of instructing styles. Consider publishing candid reviews of various instructors and schools		3	1	2	6
Develop database prospect media contacts e.g. local newspapers in affluent suburbs		3	1	1	5
Approach identified media contacts		3	1	1	5
Regular liaison with media contacts		3	1	1	5
Collect and promote strong statistics developed by impartial and respected organisations to add credence to statements about safety in gliding		1	2	3	6

Recommended Marketing Activities

Conduct Focus Groups to gauge how segment responds to/how much they know about gliding

To know exactly what information shortfalls and/or misconceptions about gliding exist, it is imperative that we speak to females in this segment directly. Short of conducting a further round of qualitative research with this segment, it would be worth applying any findings from the focus groups conducted with segment 1 (see above) to this segment also.

Provide Come and Try Opportunities

The (US) Stick and Rudder Club found that Open Days encouraged interest. They could be held in conjunction with local service organisations, such as Lions or Rotary⁴.

The Gliding Federation of Australia reveals that Air Experience Flights (AEF's) are an effective recruitment tool: 'we attract over 10,000 members to the sport each year just through AEF's'⁵.

Both Biathlon Victoria and Yachting Victoria regularly use come and try opportunities for acquisition. Interestingly, Biathlon Victoria experiences the best take-up amongst the sisters, partners and daughters of current participants. In response to this trend, the organisation promotes 'bring a friend/family member' to all club events and activities. Biathlon Victoria and Yachting Victoria both highlight the hard issue of converting females who 'come and try' into fully fledged participants in the sport. Staying in touch with females who come and try gliding - informing them about future events and putting them in touch with other female gliders – would be activities worth pursuing.

Biathlon Victoria makes a conscious effort to feature females in the promotion of come and try opportunities. For example, the daughter of the organiser of an upcoming come and try weekend is assisting with the weekend's in-person promotion, features in its promotional flyer and poster and will be a leader throughout the weekend itself.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Website of the Gliding Federation of Australia Inc. – piece on Member Retention

Key Recommendations

1. Gain an understanding of the profile and motivations of current female gliders and use these findings to shape the 'how' and 'to whom' of future recruitment drives.
2. In the first instance, concentrate marketing activities on females with some form of gliding experience. Perhaps they have a direct link: they have glided in the past, they work in aviation etc. Alternatively, their link might be indirect i.e. their friend/partner/family member glides, or works in aviation.
3. When time and funds become available, direct additional marketing attention towards females without gliding experience.
4. Recommended marketing activities:
 - Seek feedback from females with gliding experience to ascertain motivations
 - Carry out profiling of current female gliders
 - Promote marketing materials via preferred communication mediums
 - Promote Female Glider Mentoring Program
 - Promote Existing Calendar of Female Gliding Events and Activities
 - Promote Gliding Tips from Females for Females
 - Conduct Focus Groups to gauge knowledge and interest of females without gliding experience
 - Provide Come and Try Opportunities

Next Steps

1. Seek buy-in to Marketing Plan by key stakeholders
2. Develop marketing budget
3. Implement Marketing Plan with corresponding Marketing Activity plans
4. Track progress of the plan
5. Review the success of the plan and make any necessary alterations

Gliding Tips for Females by Females⁶

1. Brain over Brawn

Gliding is a physical sport! Although a large part of the sport is cerebral, there is a major physical component that is probably more obvious to women than men. I have learnt a few tricks over the years to cope with the physical side of the sport.

- **Ask for Help**

Lifting wings is probably the heaviest job there is in the sport of gliding. I now have a chronic back problem after too many years of rigging and de-rigging. Even though I knew the correct way to lift using my legs rather than my back, I simply was lifting weight that was beyond my limits on a regular basis (yes, I have done plenty of outlandings). Now, I cannot lift at all. So, I have to ask others to help. I wish I had done this long ago before I ruined my back. Don't feel bad about asking. As long as you are organised and ready to go when you get some helpers, it doesn't take long at all.

- **Leverage**

Do you find that everything is done-up that little bit more than your fingers can undo? Don't feel frustrated, use some leverage. For example, the shackles on the trailer chain connected to your car will come free easily using pliers.

- **Technique**

I mentioned before the technique for lifting is to use your legs rather than your back. You can reduce the amount of strain or awkwardness if you think about technique. For example, I never lift the glider with the towing bar and pull at the same time. Ask someone to guide you in your car back to the glider or inch the car back until you reach the towing bar (must be very careful with this one).

2. Secret Men's Business

Most women did not, as children, get access to the fascinating world of mechanics. In all my years of childhood though to adulthood, it was my brother who was encouraged to do woodwork, metalwork etc. He was given model planes to build on numerous occasions. I never received one, even though I expressed an interest in aviation for as long as I can remember. In gliding, and aviation in general, it helps to have at least a cursory knowledge of the mechanical side of things. Obtaining the basic knowledge can be difficult when you are starting from almost zero.

- **Ask (stupid) Questions**

Don't feel shy to ask what a 'washer' is. Just keep on asking those basic questions and after a while you will be talking about 'hotelier couplings' like the best of them.

- **Don't Let Other People Do Things for You**

When there is a simple job to do that doesn't need special expertise, ask for help. The best way to learn is to do it yourself with some guidance.

- **Do Some Training**

Doing a Daily Inspectors course is a minimum. Become a GFA Authorised Maintenance Inspector – at least Basic Components. When you do the training, ask stupid questions and don't let other people do things for you.

3. Achievement is not a Dirty Word

Women often feel more comfortable taking on a support role rather than striving for first place. If you have had a competition background in some sport, you might have learnt to feel OK about doing well and even about winning. But, many women are not highly motivated in a competitive sense. Competition can be too challenging for some lower experienced female pilot because they are more cautious and conservative than most pilots. The best thing to do is achieve in a way that you feel

⁶ Lisa Trotter - Women & Gliding seminar, Benalla

comfortable. The road to achievement and the experience of achievement should be satisfying and enjoyable.

- **Ask Yourself Why you Like Gliding**

What is it that you get out of it? Remind yourself of this when you are planning your goals. You might love the adventure and the beauty of what you see when you are flying – learning to fly in the mountains might be the achievement that you pursue. Or, it might be the social side of gliding, being part of a community – taking on an important club role like instructor or president might be your goal. It might be the challenge and satisfaction of making progress – doing well in competition would be a good goal in this case.

- **Personal Best**

Everyone likes to see themselves progress. You can try and improve on your personal best by improving on your best speed or best distance. Or, you could measure your progress by looking at placings at competitions on a daily basis or overall.

- **Female Records**

Records and badges are milestones for achievement. There are female national and world records. Get your name in the record books...it might be more achievable than you think.

- **Women's World Gliding Championship**

You might not for a second contemplate participating in an international or world competition. But you might consider competing at a Women's World Gliding Championship.