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Should e-Marketing be Used in the Tasmanian Organic Industry?

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Abstract

This research presents an assessment of the potential of e-Marketing organic produce through the Internet directly to consumers. Using the Internet to sell organic produce directly to consumers may not be the most efficient or effective method of product distribution. It is possible however, that there are ways in which the Internet, through the process of e-Marketing, could be utilised to expand previously untapped markets for organic produce both within Australia and the Asia/ Pacific region. In order to achieve these aims, a number of qualitative research techniques have been utilised within a case study research methodology.

Keywords

Electronic Markets, Agribusiness IS, Marketing IS, Production IS, Production Planning IS

INTRODUCTION

"Electronic commerce is changing the way business is being conducted. The impact of e-Commerce is so pervasive that few organisations, if any, are debating whether or not to participate in e-Commerce. Instead they are concerned about how and to what extent to do so" (Zhuang, 1999:1).

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft Inc., in Turban *et al.* (2000) states that he knows that competition today is not among products, but among business models. He also states that irrelevancy is a bigger risk than inefficiency, and what is true of Microsoft is true for just about every other company. Deighton (1996) in his Harvard Business Review article declared that marketing, including that conducted via the WWW, is undergoing a transformation from broadcast marketing, which focuses on markets as large masses, to interactive marketing, where efforts are more customised and responsive to the individual. Since its inception in 1983, the Internet has been a catalyst for user control (Leiner *et al.*, 2000). No longer can 'marketeers' broadcast a message to a group of people and expect that it will have the intended effect. The Internet has created a revolution for users who have come to expect personalised, tailored communications (gotMarketing, 2000).

Correspondingly, the organic industry is also a new and vibrant industry, certainly estranged from the traditional ideas of growing perishable produce. The Stevensen and Tabart (1998) report suggests that, to be truly part of this new industry group, one would have to subscribe to a certain 'radical' lifestyle, which would almost certainly have ramifications on the way the produce itself can (and more importantly should) be marketed.

Predominately, agricultural products currently being e-Marketed to the consumer are able to be stored for an extended period of time, for example wine or bull semen. Products such as these are imminently suitable for e-Marketing as actually seeing the product would not reveal any more information than provided by the product description. The 'e-Market-ability' of organic produce will necessitate a substantial shift in existing e-Marketing model(s) to accommodate the organic products specific attributes/characteristics. These characteristics include the limited shelf life of products before consumption, fragility and control of damage to the product during transport, and the ability to adequately and independently describe the produce quality will need to be considered.

The organic industry is a widely diverse industry, spread thinly over the continent of Australia, and as such it requires a vast amount of resources to adequately survey. The organic growers of Tasmania represent a 'microcosm' of broad acre and niche farmers,

similar to their counterparts within the mainland of Australia, but on a smaller scale, making it an ideal place to canvass and test research ideologies. As such, the study of the Tasmanian organic growers' marketing trends may assist the organic industry at a national level to benefit from research into the application of an e-Marketing model.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Primary Industry has traditionally been important to the Tasmanian economy and forecasts predict a rise in production (Pedersen and Thomas, 1999). Organic production is increasing at a rate in excess of 20 percent per annum according to Horsley (2000) and yet, amazingly, Stevensen and Tabart (1998) note that there are no appropriate models for organic broad acre vegetable or wool production in Tasmania. It is important that the organic growers, both within Tasmania and on the mainland of Australia understand how specific technologies may be applied to an advantage within their business processes.

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

- To investigate the marketing of organic produce through researching the necessary components of a e-Marketing solution; and
- To discuss the current trends in the area of e-Marketing solutions, specifically within Tasmanian; and
- To provide an analysis of current data on the marketing and distribution methods, both existing and future intents, within the organic growers industry of Tasmania.

RESEARCH AND DESIGN METHODOLOGY

This research focuses on the collection and analysis of specific industry-based data, as it pertains to growers of organic produce in Tasmania. Due to the researcher's involvement, both philosophically and actually in the environment under study, a subjective ontology associated with interpretivism was adopted. The research results achieved also incorporated the participation of the organic industry's governing bodies.

Within this particular research, the emphasis has been on extracting marketing details from organic growers, not so much in dollar figures or units moved but rather in the perception of how their specific marketing technique(s) is/are working for the grower.

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain data from industry members. The interviews were tape-recorded and the interview texts were transcribed and 'bottom-up' coded according to the manner recommended by Miles and Huberman (1984). A series of case studies of individual growers was then developed and analysed for thematic content and relevant information pertaining to the research question.

The majority of the extracted information returned from the research's interview tool has been: (a) textual explanations of farmers' current marketing activities; (b) descriptions of proposed or intended marketing strategies; and (c) explanations for the acceptance or rejection of a provided sample e-Marketing model.

DISCUSSION

With a growth rate exceeding 20 percent per annum (Ausstat, 2001), it seems that the potential of the organic farming industry in Australia is only just beginning. Marketing is undoubtedly one of the keys to a successful organic farming system, according to Horsley (2000). Likewise, electronic market places (e-Markets) are among the most significant business channels the era of e-Commerce has produced. They bring together multiple buyers and sellers in a single application, where they can interact, negotiate prices and quantities, and allow free-market economics to rule.

(a) E-Marketing Components

There is a plethora of literature available to the new (and experienced) Internet user describing the 'where', 'why', 'when', and 'what' of e-Marketing. Yet this research has found that there is an inordinate lack of information available describing the 'how' – certainly the

'how' in layman's terms. The establishment of an e-Market business model is a relatively straightforward task, if you know the 'how'.

E-Market business 'models' determine the types/category of Internet customers the site will attract and the types of services it has to offer. According to Patel (2000), there are essentially three types of e-Market model: the seller-controlled site; the buyer-controlled site; and the dynamic supply-and-demand site.

In seller-controlled sites, success depends upon offering the right products and services, whereas Buyer-controlled sites attract buyers who know what they want, how much they want to pay, or both. In the dynamic supply-and-demand model, prices for goods and services are determined by supply and demand. All three types of 'online' markets are more customer-driven, more information-based and more personal than conventional physical markets. They are also global and immediate, in a 24 hour/7 day-a-week (24/7) environment, providing business with continual feedback on both products and services.

According to Raisch (2001), the following steps are listed as 'necessary' to develop a successful industry-based e-Marketing solution:

Step 1: Define the Marketing Vision.

Step 2: Know the Competition.

Step 3: Build an e-Value Chain.

Step 4: Define Timing.

Step 5: Develop the Business Case.

Step 6: Define the Technical Architecture.

Step 7: Develop a Partnership Plan.

All seven points should culminate in a user-friendly, easily maintained, low cost, uniquely accessible and secure website. Not an easy task by any means.

An e-Marketing plan gives the business a road map or a blue print to e-Business success. Griffin (2000) argues that 'the prerequisite to writing a good e-Marketing plan is a complete understanding of the e-Business model'. As the e-Marketing plan is developed, the business must consider how the e-Marketing effort 'fits' the business model. Further, Griffin (2000) asserts that 'at a minimum, the business model will influence the way sales are forecast and e-Marketing expenses are predicted'. The e-Marketing plan should discuss how the business will use information technologies to manage the marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion), how to plan to optimize the content, and how to allocate resources to attract new customers, create loyalty with existing ones and create revenue streams (Raisch, 2001).

It is also imperative that the marketers define the e-Marketing model before writing the e-Business plan. Griffin (2000) also defined a series of nine e-Marketing models: Merchant, Auction, Manufacturer, Affiliate, Advertising, Infomediary, Subscription, Brokerage and Virtual Communities. The method of access within and its deliverables vary, with the central access being the Internet hub or server.

CAPSICOM – e-Marketing Model

Roberts (1995) designed and presented such an e-Marketing model to the ACOTANC-95 Conference held in Lismore, NSW in 1995. His innovative 'CAPSICOM' e-Marketing model utilises the Internet to disseminate organic crop information on behalf of the grower to registered buyers. The system is a 'menu-driven program' that utilises a central data store of crop/grower information to match buyer's requirements and demands, easily and efficiently. Growers and buyers need to be registered with CAPSICOM to gain access to the systems facilities. Some of the facilities Roberts includes are: reports on crop production by location/area and the availability of specific crops; grower and farm locations; crops available along transport routes; crop prices; harvest dates/times; specialised buyer requests; e-Contracts; email; conference notifications and proceedings; and a facility for growers to bulletin-board questions and seek advise. CAPSICOM is one model of how organic growers and buyers can be effectively brought together in an immediate and open environment.

E-Marketing systems are not without their drawbacks or obstacles though, with the major 'bumps' being: (a) the produce is sold 'sight unseen'; (b) e-Marketing requires the grower to be marginally computer literate; and (c) the independent hosting of the system's software. Up until now, these obstacles could have been seen as a series of 'fatal blows' to the concept of e-Marketing and Robert's CAPSICOM system in particular. However, the recent establishment of an independent lobby group for organic producers in Tasmania, the Organic Coalition of Tasmania or OCT, the reasonable success of the Computer Aided Livestock Management (CALM) system in selling livestock 'sight unseen', although independently audited, and the number of growers already with computer and Internet access in Tasmania, it should 'pave the way' to a general acceptance of an e-Marketing model.

(b) E-Marketing Trends

A recent study from Roper Starch Worldwide (FastCompany, 1999) concludes that there is a clear (e-Commerce) mainstreaming trend. The survey also notes that purchasing goods is the fastest growing online activity, with 42 percent of Internet customers having brought something online in the previous 12 months. Further, online shopping is increasing. In 1999 alone, Internet shopping increased by 33 percent.

Informed sources such as Hassall and Associates (1990; 1996) and Hoffman and Novak (1995) predict that Internet sales will rise quarter by quarter. These analysts believe that increasing revenues will continue to rise for years when they look at statistics on the increasing number of online consumers, the thirst for convenience, and the increased number of cyber shops. Currid (2000) in his report on finding your way in an e-Market, explains that expectations for 'regular' retail sales are different. Retail follows seasonal patterns with the first quarter being lowest, followed by incremental changes through to the third quarter, then a large upward spike in the fourth. In contrast to online sales, 'regular' retail sales are measured against a year ago quarter.

One area that holds considerable e-Commerce potential is that of organic food exports. According to the Prime Ministers' Supermarket-to-Asia program's statistics, total food exports to Asia over the previous 9-year period (1991-2000) have amounted to $10,468 million, with a trend in annual growth of 10.3 percent. Horticulture apportions some $697 million of that amount, or about 6.7 percent, but shows a trend in annual growth of 10.8 percent (StatisticalPackager, 2001).

The Officers of Rural Industries Business Services (2000) noted that the market for organic food in Japan is estimated to be growing at 20 percent a year. With total sales expected to reach A$46-62 billion within the next 10 years, the Japanese market for organic products is forecast to become the largest per capita consumer worldwide. In 1996, the Government's Statistical Packager noted that the organic sector in Australia was estimated at A$90 million, plus an additional $A30 million of exports. It further stated that it is estimated that the potential market within this decade, that being the new millennium, could be in excess of A$200 million. These statistics confirm that there is an enormous market for organic products within the Asia/Pacific region alone.

Recent statistics from Ausstat (2001) found that during the 12 months to November 2000, 9.2 million adults, or 66 percent of all adults in Australia, used a computer and 6.9 million adults, or 50 percent of all adults in Australia, have accessed the Internet. In the 12 months to November 2000, 10 percent of all adults in Australia, or 1,335,000 adults, purchased or ordered goods and services for their own private use via the Internet. At the end of March 1999, an estimated 49 percent of the 147,160 farms in Australia owned or used a computer. This represents a 26 percent increase over the number of farms using a computer at March 1998 (Ausstat, 2001). Of particular interest to this paper is that the largest increase in the number of farms using a computer occurred in Tasmania, up 36 percent over the year to March 1998. Within Tasmania, the highest proportion of farms using a computer was in the state's north (50%).

With the increase in Internet usage both on the farm, in the home and overseas within the last 12 months, it should now be possible for organic grower's to have confidence that they

can reach a 'mass' demographic when e-Marketing their product, both within Australia and the Asia/Pacific region.

(c) Marketing Analysis of Tasmanian Producers

Stevensen and Tabart (1998) produced a report on a three-year study initiated by the Tasmanian Organic-Dynamic Producers Co-operative (TOP) and funded by the Natural Heritage Trust through the National Landcare Program, on the functionality and progress of Tasmanian Organic farms. According to this report, which is the most recent complete survey of Tasmanian organic growers, there are a total of 61 organically farmed properties distributed fairly evenly between the northern districts and the Derwent/Huon valleys in the south. These properties are classified within the report as Commercial, Semi-Commercial and Hobby/lifestyle farms (Table 1), of which 23, totalling 26ha in area, were enterprises focussing on vegetable production.

Category	Description	Number
A	Commercial	21
B	Semi-commercial	29
C	Hobby/ Lifestyle Farm	11

Table 1: Property Classifications – 1998. Adapted from Stevensen and Tabart (1998).

Additionally, the Stevensen and Tabart (1998) report collated the enterprise type distribution within the organics industry in Tasmania. As can be seen in Table 2, the majority of organic enterprises are vegetable, beef or herb growers, with the remainder of enterprises being unique or 'niche' growers.

Type	Number	Type	Number
Apples	5	Eucalyptus seedlings	1
Beef	20	Grapes	1
Berries	5	Herbs	13
Broad acre Potatoes	1	Honey	1
Cereals	1	Vegetables	23
Dairy	5	Poultry	1
Flowers	1	Olives	1

Note: Figures may not add up as some producers are multi-enterprise type

Table 2: Organic Enterprise Types – 1998. Adapted from Stevensen and Tabart

The Stevensen and Tabart (1998) report also conducted a survey requesting that organic producers rate the adequacy of information on management practices and marketing available to them (Table 3). A reasonable proportion of respondents indicated that information on overseas marketing (60%) and marketing within Australia and Tasmania (52%) was inadequate.

	(%age of farmers)		
Topic:	Excellent	Adequate	Inadequate
In Tasmania	4	40	52
On Mainland	0	40	52
International	0	16	60

Note: Figures may not add up as some producers offered no response

Table 3: Marketing Information Available. Adapted from Stevensen and Tabart

This same survey also found that of the farms contacted, most endeavour to retain direct responsibility for their produce as far down the marketing chain as possible, with all of the noted case studies within the report marketing directly to the consumer. Interestingly though, 64 percent of the Stevensen and Tabart (1998) report respondents were comfortable with organic produce being exported overseas, however there is still a high degree of debate about the sustainability of such 'energy expenditure' in the long term.

CASE STUDY FINDINGS

To further investigate the current and future e-Marketing potential of Tasmanian organic producers, a series of five case studies was developed from semi-structured interviews conducted during May and June 2001. The growers and industry bodies selected for incorporation into this study were chosen on the basis that they represented the three primary areas of the organic industry in Tasmania – Industry bodies, Broad-acre Growers and Small, Niche Growers.

Industry Bodies

- OCT – Organic Coalition of Tasmania

  OCT is a peak body designed to foster the development of Tasmania's organic industry via the bringing together of a number of organisations with an involvement in commercial organic production. OCT does not intend to touch certification issues, which it feels are more appropriately dealt with on a national level. The coalition was formed in May 2001 and is based in the south of the State.

- TOPS – Tasmanian Organic/Dynamic Producers

  TOPS is one of seven certification bodies in Tasmania. Established in 1988 when a splinter group formed out of NASAA and BFA members, to further address what was then perceived as uniquely Tasmanian organic issues. It has the largest membership of the certifying bodies in Tasmania.

Broad Acre Growers

- DPIWE – Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment

  DPIWEs research farm at Stoney Rise in Devonport was established in 1999 with a mandate to establish a research facility and training ground for 'converting' traditional growers. The research farm, consisting of 6 x 3 Ha paddocks, makes it one of the larger organic production sites in Tasmania.

Small and Niche Growers

- Grower #1 – A North-western-based independent grower

  Grower #1 works from a structured organic garden located in Penguin. Most of the organic produce is sent to local markets or sold to neighbours/ friends. The garden was established in 1996 and has been used over the past few years as a teaching garden for field days and organic training purposes.

- Grower #2 – A southern-based independent grower.

  Grower #2 operates an organic herb business in collaboration with a business partner. The produce is packaged and distributed locally, mainly in the south, interstate and to a very small degree internationally. The garden has been established for some 4 years and is considered to be of optimum size.

Responses to questions regarding past and current grower marketing processes varied only slightly, with all respondents indicating that word of mouth and farm door sales were their predominant current means of marketing, as can be seen in Table 4.

Marketing Type	Respondents
Word of Mouth	5
Farm Door	3
Newspaper	1
Magazine	1
Radio/ TV	0
Internet	1

Note: Figures may not add up as some producers offered multi methods of marketing

Table 4: Current Marketing Methods – 2001

Some of the larger broad acre farms have developed their own individual market contacts interstate, but very few (possibly only one) have made the transition from local/interstate to overseas markets. The reasons stated vary considerably, from a lack of interest to issues regarding transport, currency exchange, contact development and cultural disadvantages.

Regularly during the data gathering interviews, the phrase 'we can grow it, but we don't know how to sell it' appeared in differing contexts and wordings.

> *… We can grow, we cannot sell it. And that is exactly the problem, on the scale that we are looking at…*
>
> (Interview #3: Ln: 181-182)

Additionally, the agricultural industry in Tasmania is also somewhat unique from the rest of Australia, in that most of the conventional agriculture in Tasmania is grown to contract.

> *…In Tasmanian we have this peculiar situation where none of our conventional growers have any idea about marketing… because they all contract their sales. So when we convert them over we've got not only the technical things to consider but their marketing ability, which they do not have.*
>
> (Interview #3: Ln: 184 - 188)

Consequently, this brings about a dire lack of marketing expertise in those growers who convert from traditional means of agricultural production to organic processes and those who are using the traditional agricultural marketing methodology as a model for their own marketing process. Marketing, as such, by Tasmanian organic growers has been, and currently is, a matter for individual grower effort.

This individualist marketing methodology may be a product of the underlying philosophy driving many organic producers. This philosophy, which largely critiques traditional techniques of agricultural cultivation, encourages and supports an individualistic approach to finding and developing less biologically-threatening and more bio-sustainable, nature-harmonious alternatives to the production of food.

However, individualistic approaches to marketing can bring about an over supply of specific types of produce, leading to market denigration and to destructive, inter-industry competition.

> *… but I went to New Zealand and they said we know you, you're Tasmanian. You flooded the Sydney market with carrots! I said, it wasn't me, it was someone else…*
>
> (Interview #3: Ln: 213-215)

Further, the process of marketing requires time and resources. Larger growers have facilities and resources available to 'entertain' the process of marketing. Small growers have little or no resources to spare. For a small, niche organic farm, operated by only two people, to be involved in any marketing process could require the time and resourcing of 50% of the farms workforce – that being the grower him/herself. For a large grower, the labour and resource investment in a marketing program may be as little as 5% of their available workforce. A substantial difference, which may be alleviated by the small, niche growers utilising a marketing system that will equate them with the larger growers. After all, at the end of an e-Commerce transaction, nobody knows how big or small you are. They are only interested in how well you can supply their want/ demand.

This research also fund that there are two significant yet diverse groups in regard to the e-Marketing of organic produce: the philosophical organic grower and the converted traditional farmer. Both groups agree that e-Marketing is a feasible marketing model.

> *I must admit my first thoughts are I don't know whether you'd want to do an [e-Marketing] trial in Tassie. It really should be set up nationally.*
>
> (Interview #1: Ln: 581-582)

> *So what if you start off with say an information or promotional web site for Tasmanian organic produce and then try to… sort of… have this market link up thing as part of the web site?"*
>
> (Interview #2: Ln: 510-512)

The Tasmanian organic industry is changing, and changing quickly in comparison to other agricultural industries (i.e. Wheat, Rice, Beef). Primarily these changes are to do with the significant increase in the size of organic properties in Tasmania and the move away from small, niche farms to larger broad-acre production sites. The study's literature review has already outlined several statistics dealing with property sizes and production types within the Tasmanian organic industry. This is consistent with an increasing trend to broad acre organic agriculture production in Tasmania, as described by Greg Whitten in his 2001 report on the 'State of the Organic Industry in Tasmania'.

This increase in the production quantities of organic produce has, more than likely, been as a direct influence of the continued rising national and global demand, which has seen some larger conventional agricultural properties convert to organics, seeing value in the premium prices paid for organic produce.

> *Very soon you'll get Field Fresh® actually develop something and they'll sub-contract growers again and we'll be out of the pot and into the fire in some respects. The organic movement will have achieved less chemicals, or no chemicals that's great! But we won't have answered this problem of agriculture where we want as much as possible for the farmers to sell…*
>
> (Interview #1: Ln: 475-479)

> *…And basically he's a grower as well so he's worried that his markets that he's already shored up on the mainland are going to be undermined by big growers coming on-side here…*
>
> (Interview #3: Ln: 221-224)

This change will have an enormous affect on all growers. These changes will challenge the industry's philosophical ideology, which may see it subsequently evolve from one of ethical and almost revolutionist difference to traditional agriculture, to one of capitalistic opportunism. Especially as the number of conventional agriculturists converting to organics increases in an effort to gain some commercial advantage on the premium prices paid for organic produce.

The Tasmanian organic industry has, over a number of years, developed a very active channel for the sharing of organic growing techniques and information. It would appear from the interview respondents, that each interviewee either knew each other or, at the very least, knew of each other and their respective business abilities, types of produce grown, grower locations and such like.

> *…There are researchers in every state of Australia, who are working on organics…we've almost got a full suite of researchers working around the country on organics, who are actually communicating now…*
>
> (Interview #3: Ln: 247-250)

> *…I get around with this TOFAS project I am running. We provide advice on organic produce. Well now I have visited about 20 or 30 organic properties and about 20 non-organic farms…"*
>
> (Interview #1: Ln:388-390)

It is this system of knowledge transfer among growers that has emerged as one of the backbones of the organic industry in Tasmania and as such should be used as a conduit for the transference of marketing information and methodologies within (and external to) the Tasmanian organic industry.

CONCLUSION

We are now seeing a transformation of the organic industry. To date it has been seen primarily as a small cottage industry, individually focussed but it is now moving to a broad-spectrum mainstream industry characterised by a diversity of produce and small, intermediate and large scales of production. So while the smaller labour-intensive organic operations supplying niche markets continue to thrive, larger scale organic operators are showing that mechanised broad-acre organic production for larger mainland and overseas markets is a profitable option for Tasmanian agriculture.

The presence in the market of a strong Tasmanian organic industry will only enhance the state's clean, green image further. Tasmania is well situated to develop a major organic industry because of our climate, our isolation and the diversity of our agriculture, and the rapid growth of our markets.

Undoubtedly, it is the commercialisation of the organic industry that is driving the evolution of the Tasmanian organic industry. However, the initial processes established within the organic industry will ultimately change. This will not mean necessarily the process of certification will change. Certification is a well-established process and conforms not just to Australian standards but to International standards set by IFOAM. These changes will be seen in the initiation and formalisation processes that new growers undertake and will entail the utilisation of the new electronic media to source information on organic growing, establish trading relationships both locally and globally, and create interactive e-Markets in which to sell their produce.

While the cottage-industry style marketing processes of farm gate and local market sales are likely to remain, especially for small quantities of niche product, there is an increasing need for the organic industry to develop a wider and more global approach to the advertising and sale of their produce. This is especially the case as the larger broad-acre growers produce increasing quantities of organic produce.

The process of market creation within the organic industry needs to change also. No longer is it possible, nor practical, to arrange the sale of an entire paddock of organic produce on 'a handshake and a nod'. The industry must move its marketing processes into the 21st century and that will certainly necessitate the adoption of interactive marketing methodologies such as e-Marketing.

The national and global expanding organic market is providing particular opportunities for Tasmania to develop, such as supplying fresh organic produce during the northern hemispheres off-season and maximising our image as a producer of high quality organic produce. However, none of these tantalising market opportunities will become available unless the Tasmanian organic industry advertises its produce effectively, and that means globally, through the conduit of e-Marketing.

There are also positive indications for downstream processing industries within the state as well. As more organic produce from these larger organic operations becomes available, processing and manufacturing industries are going to have significant reliable supplies enabling them to focus on downstream processing for larger markets. These downstream producers are certainly going to utilise whatever method of marketing effectively gets their finished product out into the market place, and this will more than likely be e-Marketing. Further, there would also be positive spin-offs in other areas, such as Tourism. As a network of tourist-orientated organic enterprises develops, the organic industry can become a major tourist draw card for the state.

Acceptance within the industry is another vital aspect of the Tasmanian organic growers industry. The organic industry has an obligation to accept the change that is happening and move into a new commercial focus that utilises e-Marketing as a best tool to assist in changing their marketing focus. This research has found that the organic industry is ready for the introduction of such an e-Marketing system, as the current processes of evolution and commercialisation drive the industry forward into a new and exciting industry format.

Further, the Tasmanian organic industry has a well-developed system of knowledge transference in operation. New and existing growers are regularly in contact with one another at field days, industry sessions or simply by email. This process of inter-industry

education has made the Tasmanian industry a more cohesive collection of growers than possibly the organic growers on the mainland of Australia. Tasmanian growers are more aware of each grower's agricultural abilities and produce variety(s) than any other state's growers. This has set the scene for the introduction of an e-Marketing methodology into the organic industry and should be identified by the organic industry as an asset, worthy of maintaining and even expanding.

Interestingly, a pre-requisite identified by Griffin (2000) for the effective utilisation of an e-Marketing methodology, is the collaboration of all the members within a specific industry type. The Tasmanian organic growers have such cross and inter-industry collaboration. This collaboration comes from the effective distribution of knowledge within the Tasmanian organic industry, and has established the foundations for the successful implementation of an e-Marketing methodology into the organic industry.

Whether we like it or not 'organics' is being mainstreamed. The organic industry in Tasmania is moving into a new expansion phase in its development as existing growers increase production of high value products. The future looks bright but to realise its potential the organic industry needs accept that change is happening now and embrace it and its encompassing features, otherwise the opportunity to partake in the global marketplace for organic produce will be lost, much to the detriment of the Tasmanian organic industry and the state.

Finally, commercialisation and all that it entails is driving the evolution of the Tasmanian organic industry. This should indicate that e-Marketing is the logical choice for the next stage of organic industry's marketing development. Evolution is a fact for all industry. Industry either evolves positively or negatively, the choice often decided by whether an industry embraces the change, (i.e. IBM's movement from producing typewriters to leading the world in computer production) or whether the industry ignores them to their detriment. The Tasmanian organic growers industry has both commercialisation and evolution driving its remarkable growth. It is these two processes that have ensured an e-Marketing methodology was not only ready for acceptance into the industry, but a necessity.

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