

5-1-2019

The Effects of Emotional Versus Rational Message Framing on Brand Attachment and Brand Loyalty

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THE EFFECTS OF EMOTIONAL VERSUS RATIONAL MESSAGE FRAMING
ON BRAND ATTACHMENT AND BRAND LOYALTY

By

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Bachelor of Arts - Multidisciplinary Studies
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2017

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies

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May 2019

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Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
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April 15, 2019

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The Effects of Emotional Versus Rational Message Framing on Brand Attachment and Brand Loyalty

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts - Journalism and Media Studies
Hank Greenspun School of Journalism and Media Studies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship among message framing in social media, brand attachment, and brand loyalty for higher education institutions. In particular, this study compares the effectiveness of rational versus emotional message framing in different message contexts, such as sports or academic-related stories. Furthermore, this study examines the congruent effect between message framing and contents in higher education. Specifically, this study predicts that the more message framing and contents are congruent, the greater brand attachment and brand loyalty consumers will have. To analyze the effects of message framing and type of contents, this study adopts experimental design method. The findings of this research indicate that previous involvement with a brand predicts high brand attachment and brand loyalty and needs to be present prior to the strengthening process of brand attachment and brand loyalty. Therefore, previous brand involvement can be measured and related to the effectiveness of strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I want to thank my committee members for the continuous support throughout the process of putting together this master thesis. More importantly, I want to thank each and every one of them for their guidance and for taking the time to read my work, and imply constructive criticism along the way.

Dr. Stoker, thank you for being my committee chair and continuous words of encouragement and support throughout the process despite your tight schedule and duties as the department chair. Dr. Burroughs, my academic adviser, professor, and committee member, thank you for always having an open ear and words of encouragement for me. Dr. Guthrie, an incredible skilled and talented scholar, I am beyond grateful to have you on my committee. Special thanks to Dr. Kim, for all your guidance throughout the process of developing and structuring my experimental design and for all the countless meetings to perfection my work. Thank you for all the cups of tea in your office and all the good laughs we had together. You had a big impact on work and I will be forever grateful for you. I am very grateful and fortunate to have such amazing staff as scholarly support system and mentors during my graduate journey.

To my best friend, Denise. Thank you for always believing in me, telling me how proud you are of me and you always have the right words of encouragement for me. Our hours long phone conversations across the globe saved my sanity and kept me humbled throughout my whole graduate education. Thank you for our unique lifetime friendship! You are my soul mate and I love miss you so much.

Most importantly, I want to thank my family. To my mom and dad who never stopped believing in me. Thank you for your endless support no matter where in the world I am. Their endless trust and unconditional love leaves me speechless. Leaving you and moving to another

country has been the hardest decision I have ever made, but knowing that you always got my back means the world to me. To my sister, Livia, whose love and support means more to me than words will ever be able to describe. You are not only my big sister; you are role model and I am sorry for being so far away from you and your precious little family chasing my dreams on a different continent. Thank you for understanding and supporting my life decisions.

Mama Anja, Papa Lutz and Livia I love you and miss you every day.

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INTRODUCTION

In a world of globalization and endless opportunities to study anywhere around the globe, marketing strategies in higher education have gained incredible importance. The rising competition, especially in English speaking nations such as the USA, Canada, England and Australia, forces institutions to direct their focus towards self-marketing strategies to stand out next to their international competition to secure continuous high enrollment rates (Ivy, 2008). Previous literature covered the elements of strategic marketing, such as market positioning, market planning, and relationship marketing, in higher education systems. However, just analyzing those strategies may only be the beginning of understanding the functionality and effectiveness of marketing contents, especially in an era dictated by the rising power of social media.

It is undeniable that social media has become an incredibly important and powerful marketing tool for businesses worldwide. Many researchers stress the significance and effectiveness of social media platforms from a socioeconomic standpoint, such as Kim, Lui and Shan (2017) who emphasize the increase in social engagement and interactions on social media. Online platforms create access to a constant information feed that grabs peoples' attention and hooks them to the outlet (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). Information spread and promoted through social media have the potential, to be distributed to a large crowd instantly. Businesses release information and at the same time consumers have the ability to influence the released content and its effectiveness. Existing social media research suggests that social media turned into a platform lead by customer-generated content (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), which means that social media content is based on the demand and interests of online customers. Based on the enabled interactivity through social media, Word-of-Mouth (WOM) as a marketing tool emerged and

developed into an important marketing piece. Castronovo and Huang (2012) describe WOM as a “peer-to-peer communication” that is considered as a “reliable source of product information” (p. 118). Brands utilize social media and WOM strategies as one of the main marketing tools to promote, develop and maintain an effective brand image.

However, it is not only important to understand social media as a marketing tool, but also to understand the significance and effectiveness of the content that is released on the social media sites in order to evaluate and predict a business’ success. Social media marketing may not be as successful when published content is not compatible with the consumer’s needs and desires. In order to understand the critical selection of social media content, it is important to look at the topic from a wide range of influencing factors to determine and analyze all the moving parts for a successful marketing message. Today, social media is one of the most frequently used marketing tools for higher education instituted due to its global accessibility and potential to reach an international audience faster than any existing medium. Therefore, it is important to extend and maybe even update past marketing literature while focusing on the power of content and language in social media marketing, particularly in higher education.

For this research, the focus was set on higher education institutions as a business. Students attending a university are already considered an active part of an institution and can therefore be seen as a consumer of the educational services offered by the university. Higher education institutions utilize social media as an interactive marketing tool, just like any other company, to promote, inform about events and services, and create and maintain relationships with students and alumni. Marketing researchers emphasize the importance of developing and maintaining brand loyalty (Hossain & Sakib, 2016), which means that it is crucial to develop a connection between the students and the university. However, competition is increasingly

growing within the university marketing industry and student recruitment (Dennis, Papagiannidis, Almanos & Bourlakis, 2016), which makes it inevitable to turn the focus on the significance of marketing content in relation to brand attachment and brand loyalty.

Many universities across the country host a variety of sports teams that are competing in National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I (NCAA I). Scholars suggest that sports play a crucial part in process of establishing brand attachments. According to a study conducted by Kim, Liu and Shan (2017), students feel more attached to a university after participating and attending university sports events. Division I universities host a variety of sports that can be utilized to establish, strengthen and maintain brand loyalty. University as an institution and brand can be examined from two sides in terms of brand loyalty and brand attachment; from an academic or athletic standpoint. As previously mentioned, a great body of literature about brand attachment in sports was located. On the other hand, research results about brand attachment in higher education has been limited. A research study conducted by Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, and Bourlakis (2016) suggested that students' satisfaction, trust and attachment are correlated with the brand image and brand identity; meaning that the perceived brand image can have a positive influence on the students' satisfaction, trust and attachment.

The ultimate goal for universities is to develop its own brand and establish a brand identity that then creates strong relationships between the institution and its students. In addition, a long- term goal then is to maintain that relationship successfully until graduation and beyond. Here, the biggest challenge is to develop and strengthen brand loyalty. According to Bock, Poole and Joseph (2014), the success of a brand requires a strong focus of the consumers' desires, which is why this research directs its main topic area towards the determination of the most effective marketing content. Therefore, the question that needs to be asked is if university

students build a stronger brand attachment and brand loyalty by being exposed to university sports-related marketing content or content focusing on academics. The challenge here is to determine what content may strengthen a student's loyalty more successful and which content may develop a stronger connection between student and institution.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship among message framing in social media, brand attachment, and brand loyalty for higher education institution. In particular, this study will compare the effectiveness of rational versus emotional message framing in different message contexts such as sports and academic related stories.

This research study highlights scholarly sources and applies an experiment designs based on previous literature. After heavy research and intensive literature review this research narrows down the main insights needed to comprehend the reasoning behind and development of the methodology. Furthermore, the conducted data of the experiment was analyzed and interpreted in regards of the hypotheses. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the results based on the collected data, hypotheses and reviewed literature. This research study also discusses possible limitations of the study's experiment and suggest future implications to improve and expand the experimental design.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Branding as a Marketing Tool in Higher Education

The effectiveness of marketing contents heavily relies on the establishment of the brand. Without a clear and straightforward branding, strategy marketing contents may fail to represent a brands to its highest potential. Therefore, in order for students to build a form of connection or attachment to an institution, there has to be an established brand that the student can identify with. First of all, the brand's values need to be developed and clear to the consumer (Bock, Poole and Joseph, 2014) in order for the customer to decide if the brand's values are compatible with one's own views. In addition, Bock, Poole and Joseph (2014) point out the necessity of strategic brand credibility and also suggests that high connectivity to the student create and strengthen students' loyalty towards an institution. Therefore, establishing a strong brand as a university turns out to be tremendously important, especially when it comes to continuously recruiting new students for the university campus. Universities stand under great pressure, due to the intense competition between institutions, and have to develop a brand personality that stands out among the wide range of competition (Rauschnabel, Krey & Babin, 2016). Marketing, in general, is about uniqueness and standing out and separating from the crowd. Rauschnabel, Krey and Babin (2016) developed a study concluding six dimension that break down university brand personality indifferent categories such as "prestige", "sincerity", "appeal", "lively", "conscientiousness", "cosmopolitan" (p. 3083). Those six dimensions function as a tool to interpret and validate a university's brand personality and set a foundation for a deeper understanding of why students develop attachments towards universities. Existing literature emphasizes the significance of brand image as well as identity in correlation with attachment, commitment and brand satisfaction (Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, & Bourlakis, 2016). The dimensions are broken

down in more detailed definitions for each dimension's value. The "prestige" dimension is defined based on a universities success, reputation and overall public perception, whereas "sincerity" is based on factors such as quality of service, fairness and perceived helpfulness (Rauschnabel, Krey & Babin, 2016). Furthermore, Rauschnabel, Krey and Babin (2016) define "appeal as perceived degree of appeal, "lively" as the perceived lifestyle on campus, "conscientiousness" as the structure and effectiveness of the university departments, and finally "cosmopolitan" as the present connections on campus. All dimensions combined form a unique brand personality.

The success of branding higher education institutes heavily relies on the building and maintenance of long-term relationships with our target audience. To build long-term relationships, it is important to develop not only a brand but to create a strong attachment between consumer and brand.

The Importance of Relationship Marketing in Higher Education

Relationship marketing has been recognized by many scholars as an important concept when focusing on a brand's success. Long-term relationships between customers and a company are incredibly important in order to plan marketing strategies accordingly based on the intensity and strength of the customer- company relationship (Gummesson, 1987). This approach is considered one of the most successful and powerful marketing tools in the field because of its potential to reevaluate and its potential to organize marketing material strategically. A very simple concept sets the foundation for the approach of relational marketing - cost vs. benefit. Here, the participation of consumers in marketing programs is put in relation with the costs of the marketing process and is then evaluated according to its effectiveness and profitability in consumer engagement (Ashley, Noble, Donthu & Lemon, 2011). It is highly significant for

university to determine and apply not only the most effective marketing strategy but also the most budget friendly one. Especially public universities tend to have tighter budget restrictions when it comes to marketing expenses.

Zhang, Watson IV, Palmatier and Dant (2016) have developed a study that focuses on the understanding of the effectiveness and the migration stages of consumer relationship marketing. Their study has identified four states that define relationships: “transactional” (new customers, low level of trust, commitment, norms and dependency), “transitional” (medium levels of trust, commitment, norms and low level of dependency), “communal” (most profitable, oldest customers, long-term relationship with highest level of trust, commitment, norms, dependency), and “damaged” (lowest level of trust, commitment, norms, likely to leave relationship) (p.72). The identification of the most and least effective relationship stage that customers are currently in, enables marketers to react according to the relationship stage and base marketing contents on expected engagement to reduce marketing costs and increase positive long-term effects within those relationships.

Students’ overall tendencies and emotions towards a university are also one of the important outcomes of relational marketing strategy. According to Ashley, Noble, Donthu and Lemon (2011), satisfaction can be evaluated as a predictor of relational marketing engagement. If a consumer is highly satisfied with a brand, that consumer is more likely to engage in the brand’s marketing approach. In other words, if a student feels satisfied with the university’s approach of creating engaging and profitable marketing programs, the stronger the participation and higher marketing outcome.

The Role of Social Media Marketing in Relational Marketing

Relationship marketing may be executed and maintained through social media as an easily accessible source of information and successful marketing tool. Literature about social media marketing is plentiful and many scholars reviewed, examined, and evaluated the moving parts of social media. One of the main intentions of existing literature is the interactive nature of social media platforms where consumers control, create and distribute content (Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, and Mckenzie, 2008). Consumers generate and demand contents that are unique, entertaining and grab their attention. Another form of interactivity is the engagement of social media consumers through online feedback. Mangold and Faulds (2009) suggest that this form of online engagement empowers people and strengthens their “sense of community” (p. 361). Online communities form around a variety of topics and contents depending on the demand to connect with each other.

The principle of connectivity was also emphasized by van Dijck and Poell (2013) who describe the feeling of being connected in an online environment as effortless and as the opportunity to form a sense of belonging. It is beyond one’s imagination on how far the internet branches out and how many subdivisions define the pool of online communities. Social media is viewed as a powerful marketing tool (Thackeray, Neiger, Hanson, & Mckenzie, 2008, 2008) because of its potential to widely connect people and spread information through an online community. Therefore, universities should focus their attention towards interactivity through social media to increase the engagement between students and the institution. As previously mentioned, due to the strong global competition in the higher education sector, social media is considered resourceful and necessary tool to recruit worldwide.

A common marketing strategy that embodies the principle of endless possibilities though social is the Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing. Castronovo and Huang (2012) created an

influential body of literature about social media marketing and define WOM as “peer-to-peer communication” (p. 118) which means that information is transmitted by consumers to fellow consumers. With the development of today’s technology WOM can also happen in the virtual world, through social media, and is therefore labeled as electronic WOM (e-WOM) (Castronovo and Huang, 2012) and viewed as one of the most popular marketing strategies across the markets. One reason why eWOM has gained tremendous power as a social media marketing tool across the globe is the accessibility of a wide range of sources. Research has shown that the idea of connectivity positively correlates with WOM; a high level emotional connectivity increases the effectiveness of WOM (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In other words, a complex set of online connections enables a more efficient exchange and transmission of information among consumers which enables the feeling positive emotions throughout the process. Based on these insights, it is possible to assume that brands target widely connected social media consumers and to spread information, promotions etc. more effectively using the eWOM marketing strategy. Although WOM is viewed as a strong marketing tool and has great potential to increase a brand’s success rate, it is not always guaranteed. The overall goal of social media strategies, as listed by Castronovo and Huang (2012) in Table 4, are “building awareness”, “increasing sales”, and “building loyalty” for a brand (p.125). All these principles tie into the previously discussed literature and its significance.

Social media communication is an interactive outlet which means that all three goals may be reached through consumers’ participation, WOM in particular, to promote the brand. For instance, a brand may establish awareness through peer-to-peer communication and sales may be promoted through social media in terms of consumer’s referrals, feedback, or product reviews etc. Lastly, brand loyalty may also be established through peer-to-peer interaction on social

media sites based on the content shared with each other. At this point it is important to note, that each of these principles regarding establishing a stage of loyalty, building awareness and increasing sales can be applied to universities as they are seen as a service provider utilizing interactive media for marketing purposes.

Especially professional sports teams heavily rely on large consumers groups as their fan base. To ensure a close corporation, engagement and long term attachments between the two parties social media interactivity is a commonly used as a marketing tool. Sports brands utilize social media outlets daily to build relationships and connect to sport consumers online (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015) in order to provide information, keep fans entertained and engaged. Online sites are also used to create a memorable experience for the customer and to strengthen the feeling of being a part and connected to a sport institution. Furthermore, Filo, Lock & Karg's (2015) research suggests that sport fans utilize social media platforms to express fan ships and exchange emotions towards a sports brand through the online communities with the goal to gain positive reinforcements. Another great advantage of social media as a sports marketing tool is the unlimited accessibility regardless of a fan's location. Referring back to the insights gained through social media research, it is to emphasize that social media interactivity and can be performed from any location that provides internet access due to its complex network of online connections. Furthermore, Dixon, Martinez and Martin (2015) published a study that identified social media as the most successful and cheapest marketing tool for universities as an active part of its sports brand's identity.

Advanced technology allows brands to interact and engage consumers informally and on a more personal level to strengthen relationships virtually (Filo, Lock & Karg, 2015). However, sport fans primarily use that virtual relationship to consume and spread content (Kim & Trail,

2011) which leads the discussion back to the principle and significance of WOM in the brand-consumer relationship. Again, WOM is an incredibly powerful marketing tool especially when it comes to university and sports marketing, or even both combined.

Considering principles of interactivity, as previously discussed, Kim, Liu & Shan's (2017) study ties all the insights together, directs the attention towards universities and identifies them as brands and students as consumers. Moreover, their study suggests that university sports support and engagement strengthen connectivity, satisfaction and attachment towards the institution (Kim, Liu & Shan, 2017). In other words, students who spend time engaging in university associated activities, such as a sports event, develop a stronger attachment towards the institution and students form a relationship with the institution as well as with the sports programs, also referred to as relationship marketing.

Emotional vs. Rational Message Framing in Strategic Communication

It is important to point out that social media marketing content, if designed poorly, has a great potential of failing its purpose of successfully developing and strengthening brand attachment. Therefore, it is crucial to understand all moving parts when creating contents, such as the selection language and design layouts. For that matter, this study divides the strategy of creating marketing contents in two types of appeals; emotional versus rational. Previous literature, published even way before social media entered the picture as a marketing tool, focused on and analyzed emotional and rational appeals, especially in the field of advertisement. Rational advertisement is laid out on facts and objective information about the product (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009). In addition, rational advertising can be utilized as a traditional tool to promote a product by appealing to the consumers logical and rational abilities of processing information to enhance persuasion through facts (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). A

research conducted by Weinberg and Spotts (1989) points out that U.S ads increased the amount of informative content which indicates a change of focus in advertising content in the US advertising market. Due to regularly conducted marketing researches, “advertising is getting more personalized and under consumers’ control”, according to Manchon, Morante and Castella-Mate (2014) (p. 271). That same statement is cited from a study conducted by Manchon, Morante & Castella-Mate (2014) which has shown that higher and ratings of advertisements and more positive effects on consumers’ attitude towards a product were recorded through rational appeals in advertising rather than the emotional.

In comparison, Albers-Miller and Stafford (1999) suggest that advertisement can also focus on the emotions embodied and triggered by an advertised product. Therefore, emotional appeals in advertisements are directed towards experienced emotions such as happiness, likability and effectiveness represented by the product which can influence a consumers buying behavior. Furthermore, Agres, Edell and Dubinsky (1990) found that emotions depicted in television commercials may be transferable to the viewer. In other words, depicted happy emotions may be adapted by the audience and make them feel happy as well.

A common strategy used by previous scholars to examine consumer involvement in advertising is the use of the Foote, Cone and Belding (FCB) grid mode. Weinberg and Spotts (1989) describe the functionality of the FCB as “the involvement and rational/ emotional dimensions to classify decision making situations for products” (p. 90). Zaichkowsky’s (1985) study of the FCB grid primarily focuses on the decision making process in relation to the consumer’s buying behaviors and designed a grid that gives insight on how to categorize and measure a consumer involvement with the product. Ratchford’s (1987) study confirms the reliability and accuracy of such measurements and suggests that the FCB grid is a consistent

construct. Therefore, based on the insights drawn from scholars studying the FCB grid, it may be able to assume that involvement with a product may be in direct correlation with a consumer's decision making process.

Furthermore, the majority of existing literature focusing on emotional and rational appeals, were published prior to the rise of the social media marketing era which indicates a need for new studies, such as this one. Globalization connects nations with different cultures which enriches diversity and growth. However, cultural differences all over the world count to one of the biggest challenges when creating a worldwide strongly appealing advertisement (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). In other words, diverse cultures demand different types of creative contents in order to appeal and draw in the consumer. Many university record diversity on their campuses, which is why it is important to recognize and analyze if consumers are drawn towards making decisions based on rationality or emotions.

Message Congruence Effects in Strategic Communication

Many scholars have focused on the concept and effect of message congruence, especially in the advertisement and marketing sectors. Chang and Lee (2010) state that framing strategies can be utilized as a tool to depict and influence a consumer's perception and persuasion. Researchers such as Jamal and Al-Marri (2007) suggest a positive relationship between consumers' self-image congruence, brand preference and brand satisfaction. In other words, Jamal and Al-Marri (2007) predict brand satisfaction by considering self- congruence and preference as dependent variables. Message framing strategies should be based on the target groups and target market to achieve high brand satisfaction and "utilize information-oriented advertising by focusing on the quality of product attributes", according to Jamal and Al-Marri

(2007, p. 624). In addition, consumers evaluate brand that match their personality more positive than brand that are not compatible with their self-image (Govers & Mugge, 2004).

Sports vs. Academic Success Stories in Promoting Higher Education

To test message framing and its effect on message congruence in higher education, Angulo, Pergelova & Josep Rialp (2010) suggest rational variables (such as strategic alliances, quality and high standards, image, infrastructure and physical facilities, academic and career opportunities, and cost and tuition fees) and emotional variables (such as sociocultural influence; family, friends, barriers and supports) and Intrinsic (identity construction; personal values, wishes, and expectations; psychological, relaxation and leisure) to examine students' self-congruence and universities' brand image.

Sports, in comparison to the academic focus, requires a slightly different approach. According to Koo and Hardin (2008) the engagement and attachment between a sports spectator and a specific sport varies in strength depending on the success of the team and degree of passion for the sport.

Sports journalism has increasingly focused on athletes, as individuals, and their success stories to create deeper connections between spectators and athlete by providing personal insight about the athlete to create empathy and trigger positive emotions towards the individual (Lewis & Weaver, 2013). Lewis and Weaver (2013) suggest that narratives emphasizing positive features about an individual athlete may lead a positive associations of the athlete by the audience. In other words, athletes are perceived as good individuals first based on personal and performance based information shared in a positive manner through the media. Based on that insight, it is to assume that focusing sports content on individual athletes and their personal life as well as athletic performances can be categorized as emotional framing because it appeals to

the audience's' perception of emotions. In addition, following sports, if a spectator is passionate and interested in sports, causes strong feelings of emotions, positive and negative. Lewis and Weaver's (2013) study shows that personal information such as religion influences the intentions of future support in comparison to performance based information. That means that appealing to those emotions by emphasizing and releasing personal information may be the most effective way to frame sports content for marketing purposes because it may trigger feelings of empathy.

Comparing existing literature about athletic and academic media and marketing content, it is to assume that sports contents focus on emotional appeals to connect fans with individual athletes and therefore strengthen the overall attachment to one sports team. On the other side, contents focus on academics are assumed to be framed rationally emphasizing facts about the institutional highlight structures for student recruiting purposes. Based on the previous insights, this study suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional message framing leads to higher brand attachment and brand loyalty than rational message framing

Sub-Hypothesis 1: Sport contents using emotional framing are more effective to strengthen brand loyalty than academic contents using rational framing.

Brand Attachment in Higher Education

Taking all the moving pieces of marketing strategies into consideration, brand attachment is considered a powerful marketing tool to secure, manage and manipulate consumers' buying behaviors. Once a strong brand personality is established, the challenge lies in strengthening, maintaining, and securing consumers' attachment over time. Many marketing scholars studying

brand attachment draw interdisciplinary connections to the psychological theory of attachments and its origin. One of the most influential and most frequently cited scholars examining attachment in various contexts is John Bowlby. Bowlby (1982) mentions that attachments form in early childhood primarily towards children's caregivers and defines attachment behavior as "any form of behavior that results in a person attending or maintaining proximity" to another person (p. 668). That principle of attachment behavior can be applied to brand marketing. Marketers' overall focus is on the strategies that develop a bond between consumers and a brand in a way that the consumers consciously chose proximity and a long-term relationship with the brand, the brand's product or the brand's services.

A study conducted by David and Bearden (2017) focused its attention towards consumers' buying behavior in relation to attachment styles. This research looks at the purchasing behaviors of consumers after viewing an advertisement in relation to the consumer's attachment style. David and Bearden (2017) differentiate between a secure and anxious attachment style and compare both attachment styles in the context of purchasing behaviors. Depending on the content, in this case relational stimulus versus no relational stimulus, consumer's attachment style directly influences the consumer's buying behavior towards a product that focused on and depicted relationships in advertisements (David & Bearden, 2017). Results have shown that securely attached consumers are more likely to purchase products that have been portrayed with a relational stimulus (i.e. a couple representing the product), whereas anxiously attached individuals would more likely choose to buy a product that is promoted by a single person. This insight can be a useful to successfully determine the marketing target groups for specific brands based on brand image and brand identity. Also, these insights may be

compatible to be applied towards university marketing strategies in terms of congruence and brand attachment.

Furthermore, for this research, the fundamental research process has been directed towards emotional attachment and brand attachment to establish a deeper understanding of the principles and functionality of social media marketing strategies. Before emotional attachment literature can be discussed in more detail, the focus will be on understanding the concepts and connection of perception and brand attachment first.

Research in that area suggest that students create expectations and perceptions prior to enrolling and attending a university based on the image the university established as a brand (Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, & Bourlakis, 2016). Intensive research about universities enables students to be able to compare institutions and decide which one is the most suitable based on personal needs and values. Additional research also suggest that perception plays a significant role in brand attachment and can be used as a scale to measure attachment strength. The perception of a brand's overall quality, including values and services, may influence the strength of attachment towards the brand, "and hence satisfaction, commitment and brand equity", according to Dennis et. al (2016) (p. 3053). Therefore, perceived brand quality relies on the development of the brand's image early on in the marketing process. Considering all the insights about brand attachment, a consumer may be viewed as a crucial part of a marketing system and considered core variable of marketing research.

Another way to examine brand attachment is by evaluating emotional attachment. Jiménez and Voss (2014) define emotional attachment as "the emotional bond connecting an individual with a specific target" (p. 360). Therefore, certain positive emotions may be associated with a brand and form a binding bond between a customer and a brand. Thomson,

MacInnis and Park (2005) lay out the framework for emotional attachment to brands and suggest that emotional attachment is measurable and can be used as scale to determine and validate the intensity of brand attachment. In their study, Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) designed a map focusing and sets of emotions that can be interpreted as positive emotions in relationship to brand attachment. Such emotions are described as “Affection”, “Passion”, and ”Connection” are then paired with emotions of attachment such as “Affectionate”, “Loved”, “Passionate”, ”Bonded”, “Connected” etc., to just name a few (p.88). Identifying attachment emotions may be useful to guide marketing strategies and specify marketing goals based on those emotions. Furthermore, Dwyer, Mudrick, Greenhalgh, LeCrom and Drayer (2015) identify other positive sets of emotions including “adoration” up until “feeling of superiority due to association” (p.571), which can also be indicators for the presence of emotional attachment and therefore consumer satisfaction.

Research has also shown that emotional attachment can predict consumers’ buying behaviors. The study conducted by Jiménez and Voss (2014) suggests different alternatives to measuring emotional attachment by including self-concept maintenance (SCM) and willingness to pay (WTP) as measurable variables in different marketing contexts. Results suggest that emotional attachment is directly associated with SCM and even if SCM is identified as low, the potential for consumers to feel attached to a brand is still existing and in fact has positive impact on WTP (Jiménez & Voss, 2014). On the other hand, the same study by Jiménez and Voss (2014) also found that although a brand may play a significant role in an individual’s self-concept maintenance process, that does not automatically mean that emotional attachments to the brand are present. In conclusion, brands can be perceived as valuable in the process of validating the self but does not always require an emotional attachment. Also, brand attachment may not be

present but the brand itself may be utilized to serve the consumer's needs at the time. However, it is important to mention that the attachment strength can be predicted by evaluating the degree of emotional attachment (Dwyer, Mudrick, Greenhalgh, LeCrom & Drayer, 2015) which is another reason to believe that strong connections towards a university and a feeling of belonging may be reached by pushing positive emotional boundaries through the production of specific marketing contents. University sports may trigger emotions, good and bad. However, research regarding that matter has not been located and therefore it is legitimate to say that this statement is an assumption.

Jiménez and Voss' (2014) study also found that "attachment predicts separation distress" (p.367). The concept of separation distress may be caused by strong attachment and proves that people seek proximity when feeling strongly attached; the stronger the attachment the bigger the separation distress. Therefore, the stronger the consumer's brand attachment, the bigger the distress when separated or hindered from accessing or consuming the brand. However, it is not proven if the principle of separation anxiety would apply to the relationship and attachment between university students and the institution or university sports.

Again, these insight proves that the degree of emotional attachment does not only determines the strength of brand attachment but also predicts and indicates brand satisfaction (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005). Now that the moving parts of brand attachment are established, the literature review is now directed towards brand loyalty in regards of consumer marketing.

Brand Attachment and Brand Loyalty

Strong bonds between consumer and brand are what the marketing industry targets and thrives for. To optimize marketing strategies and understand consumer behavior on a more

sophisticated level, existing scholarly sources have also directed their attention towards brand loyalty as one of the most important principles in understanding successful brand marketing. Due to a tremendous growth of competition with the higher education sector, the loyalty of students has become an important asset to secure growth and development of an institution (Hossain & Sakib, 2016). Hossain and Sakib (2016) developed a concept that breaks down factors that are predicted to influence university students' brand loyalty. Such factors are: advantageousness, relevance, popularity, updated, online communication and e-WOM. All these factors need to be considered when analyzing the quality and strength of brand loyalty. In addition, research has also found a direct connection between brand attachment and brand loyalty (Pedeliento, Andreini, Bergamaschi & Salo, 2016). Evidentially, the stronger a consumer feels attached to a brand, the more likely is the perception of brand loyalty high. Brand loyalty is also based on the overlap of the consumer's and the brand's values and intentions (Hossain & Sakib, 2016). If consumers identify themselves with a brand or product and decide that the brand is compatible with the person's self-concept, consumers are more likely to experience strong brand loyalty. This ties back in the self-concept maintenance and the direct connection to emotional attachment introduced earlier by Jiménez and Voss (2014). Therefore, this study suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Higher congruence between message framing and contents will create stronger brand attachment and brand loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to examine the congruent effect between message framing and contents in higher education. Specifically, this study predicts that the more message framing and contents are congruent, the greater brand attachment and brand loyalty consumers will have. Furthermore, this study predicts that emotional message framing will be more effective to strengthen brand loyalty and brand attachment. To analyze the effects of message framing in relation to the different types of content, this study adopts experimental design method. Qualitative researchers analyzed advantages of experimental designs for research studies and point out that experiments are used to provide evidence to prove the effectiveness of independent variables (Berger, 2018). Furthermore, Wimmer and Dominick (2013), also claim that experimental designs are considered the “best social science research method for establishing causality” (p. 239). Therefore, an experimental design is used to find evidence that supports the hypotheses of this research.

Experimental Design

The hypotheses proposed in this study are the following. First, Hypothesis 1 is divided into a main and a sub hypothesis. The main hypothesis (MH1) of this study predicts that emotional message framing will always be more effective in strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty than rationally framed messages. Therefore, the sub- hypothesis (SH1), directly related to the main hypothesis, narrows down the predictions and proposes that sport contents using emotional framing are more effective to strengthen brand loyalty than academic contents using rational framing. The second hypothesis (H2) states that higher congruence between message framing and contents will create stronger brand attachment and brand loyalty. To test

these hypotheses, this study will use a 2 x 2 factorial design. The independent variables in this study are message framing (i.e., emotional vs. rational) and type of contents (i.e. sports vs. academic). This experiment will include two-way Analysis of Variance (2-way ANOVA analysis) to further test variable and prove or disprove this study's hypotheses. To run, analyze and interpret data the data analysis program SPSS was used.

Stimuli

The manipulation of the independent variables consists of the customization emotional and rational message frames and sports and academic contents. Emotional message framing focuses on an individual's success story after overcoming adversity. For example, the success story focuses on personal information about the individual, details about a tragic event that changed the individual and later lead to a personal achievement. When talking about emotional message framing, success stories are created to develop a deep connections between the audience and athlete by providing personal insight about the athlete to create empathy and trigger positive emotions towards the individual (Lewis & Weaver, 2013). Therefore, the main goal of contents with emotional appeals is to trigger and transfer any type of emotions (eg. happiness, sadness, empathy) (Agres, Edell & Dubinsky, 1990) to an audience while reading a story. The content is displayed in a detailed way and highlights and emphasizes emotions and personal facts through vibrant and engaging voice.

On the other hand, the rational message framing approach of this study merely focused on facts and objective information (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009) about an individual's academic or athletic performance without highlighting any personal details. The participants assigned to the rationally framed content are exposed to straight forward facts about an individual academic or athletic achievements and personal performances including statistics, awards and records.

Therefore, no personal information, such as family relations and personality details, are presented through the story. Additionally, the language used in the rational stories is kept simple and short to demonstrate a cold and straightforward tone excluding any emotional language.

Dependent Variables

Involvement. To measure involvement, Thomson, McInnis and Parks' (2005) approach was applied to this study. Thomson, McInnis and Parks (2005) adopted Zaichkowsky's (1985) involvement scale to measure involvement strength, and included a 7-point semantic differential scale to rate consumer's brand involvement. For this study, the measurement scale will be modified to measure consumers' involvement with higher education institute. The items adopted and modified for this study include the following statements; "This university is relevant to me.", "This university means a lot to me.", "The university is useful to me.", and "The university is significant to me." For this study, those items are rated with a 7-point likert scale to assess the involvement intensity. The α coefficient for the involvement scale was .86 and combined four items, each rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Brand Loyalty. According to Thomson, McInnis and Parks (2005), the concept of brand loyalty consists of strong commitment to a brand. To measure brand loyalty (long-term vs. short-term), Thomson, McInnis and Parks' (2005) measurement approach is used as a template. Questions used in Thomson, McInnis and Parks' (2005) research were modified into statements to optimize the study's questionnaire design. A seven point Likert scale (*1- Strongly Disagree, 7- Strongly Agree*) was used to rate the following three statements: "I frequently buy university gear to represent my university.", "I am loyal towards the university.", and "This university is my

“ideal” university.”. The *a* coefficient for the brand loyalty scale was .79 combining three items rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Brand Attachment. To measure brand attachment, this study adapts Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus’ (2006) five-point scale with the item “I feel strongly connected to the brand” and via another item focusing on the separation anxiety aspect of attachment “I would strongly regret it if the brand was withdrawn from the market” (1 - *disagree*, 5 - *fully agree*). For this study, Esch, Langner, Schmitt, & Geus’ (2006) five-point scale has been modified to a seven-point scale (1- *Strongly Disagree*, 7 - *Strongly Agree*) to unify the measuring scales of the experiment. Also, the items were adapted to this study’s subject and therefore slightly modified to unify the scales used in the experiment. The *a* coefficient for the brand attachment scale was .86 combining three items and also rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Participants and Study Procedure

The study was conducted among a total of 101 college undergrad students from a University. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 26 and received extra credit for completing the study. Students signed an informed consent form prior to the study and then were randomly assigned to one of the following test groups:

Group 1 was exposed to social media content about an individual UNLV athlete highlighting personal athletic achievements, despite adversity, designed with emotional appeals.

Group 2 was exposed to social media content about an individual UNLV student highlighting academic achievements, despite adversity, designed with emotional appeals.

Group 3 was exposed to social media content about an individual UNLV athlete highlighting athletic achievements designed with rational appeals.

Group 4 was exposed to social media content about an individual UNLV student highlighting academic achievements designed with rational appeals.

Each group filled out a questionnaire before and after they read the randomly assigned content. The four treatment conditions for this study are created by customizing social media contents for each test group by using different framing strategies, as previously discussed. Each content, academic or athletic, presents a customized fictional individual and his personal success story. The content was framed either emotionally or rationally.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas was chosen for conducting this experimental research. The university is not highly ranked either academically nor athletically which may be interpreted with the term “neutral”. It is to assume that this neutrality may eliminate strong pre-existing biases towards the school’s academics and athletics. Furthermore, existing research, as previously discussed, seems to focus message framing analyses predominantly on television advertisements and was published in early years prior to social media. This research experiment is inspired to possibly update existing research by implying insights about social media message framing and advertising strategies.

RESULTS

Manipulation Check

Prior to running the research experiment, the items' functionality was pretested to ensure a valid data collection. Two items were used to evaluate the characteristics - rational vs. emotional and academic success vs. athletic accomplishments - of the story.

Participants were asked to indicate if they would describe the characteristics of the story as emotional or rational. In addition, participants were asked to evaluate whether the content of the story was about a student's academic success or a student's athletic accomplishments. For the Group 1 scenario, which is the emotional/athletic accomplishment story, 97.5 % (N = 81) people identified the rational/athletic accomplishment story as emotional than rational, and only 2.5 % (N = 2) people said the story is more rational than emotional. Also, 100 % (N = 83) respondents indicated that this story is about athletic accomplishments, and no one said this story is about academic success story. The Group 2 scenario was based on an emotional/academic success. The results of the pretest showed that 96% (N = 80) people identified this story is more emotional than rational, and only 4% (N = 3) people said the story is more rational than emotional. Also, 100% (N = 83) respondents indicated that this story is about academic success, and no one said this story is about athletic accomplishments. Among 83 respondents, 96% (N = 80) people identified the Group 3 scenario - rational/athletic accomplishment story - as more rational than emotional, and only 4% (N = 3) people said the story is more emotional than rational. Also, 98.8 % (N = 82) respondents indicated that this story is about athletic accomplishments, and 1.2 % (N = 1) said this story is about academic success story. The Group 4 scenario was about a rational/academic success story. 96.4 % (N = 80) people identified this story is more rational than emotional, and only 3.6 % (N = 3) people said the story is more

rational than emotional. Also, 98.8 % (N = 82) respondents indicated that this story is about academic success story, and only 1.2 % (N = 1) said this story is about athletic accomplishments. In conclusion, this pretest results indicate that the manipulation of the rational vs. emotional, and academic vs. athletic success stories was successful.

Descriptive Statistics and Data Labeling Strategy

The data collected for this project was organize, analyze and interpret the data with the data analysis software SPSS. After evaluating the descriptive statistics, a total of one transgender, 43.6 % (N = 44) male, and 54.5 % (N = 55) female participants completed the study and one participant's gender was recorded as "prefer not to answer" (see Table 1). The average age of all participants was 20. Additional descriptive data analysis has shown that 23.8 % (N = 24) of the participants are transfer students compared to 76.2 % (N = 77) non- transfer students. In addition, participants were asked to report their academic year and statistics show that 24.8 % (N = 25) of the participating students are Freshman, 34.7% (N = 35) are Sophomore, 24.8 % (N = 25) are Juniors, and 15.8% (N = 16) are Seniors at UNLV. The average GPA recorded among the participants is 3.4. Respondents' ethnicities were composed of are White (33.7%, N= 34), African American (14.9%, N=15), Hispanic (4.9 %, N=15), Asian (18.8 %, N=19) and multiple ethnicities (10.9%, N=11) (see Table 1).

To simplify the analysis and interpretation, instrument items from the questionnaire were grouped together and then combined as variables. For the study the measured items are labeled as *Inv* for involvement, *BLoy* for brand loyalty, and *BAtt* for brand attachment. To analyze the congruence effect, the survey conducted through the study involved items that access the importance of academics, athletics, rational factors about the university and emotional components influencing a student's university choice. Again, items were combined and labeled

to optimize the data arrangement. The following labels stand for the items that college students value or not value when choosing a university. Therefore, *AcadImport* stands for academic congruence which indicates the importance of academic items, *SportsImport* stands for the importance of athletics and indicates if the participants value university sports. *RationalImport* describes the participants rational choices when choosing a university, such as the relevance of costs and tuition fees. Lastly, *EmotionalImport* describes emotional tendencies, such as the importance of family support, when choosing a university.

Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses, a univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was run with involvement, brand attachment, and brand loyalty as the dependent variables, and message framing (i.e., emotional vs. rational) and message contents (i.e., athletic vs. academic) as the independent variables. The Hypothesis 1 (MH1) predicts that emotional message framing will always be more effective in strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty than rationally framed messages. However, results indicated that message framing had no significant main effects on brand loyalty or brand attachment. Therefore, MH1 was not supported.

The Sub-Hypothesis 1 (SH1), based on the main hypothesis 1, proposes that sport contents using emotional framing are more effective to strengthen brand loyalty than academic contents using rational framing. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare message framing and message contents in brand loyalty and brand attachment. Results reported from the independent-sample t-test have shown that there is no significant difference between sport contents using emotional framing and academic contents using rational framing.

Lastly, the second hypothesis (H2) foresees that higher congruence between message framing and contents will create stronger brand attachment and brand loyalty. A univariate

analysis of variance (ANOVA) test showed that both message framing and message contents had no significant effects on brand loyalty or brand attachment. Thus, hypothesis 2 was also not supported.

The data analysis focuses on the relations between the importance of academics or athletics on brand attachment and brand loyalty. The results from the data analysis have also shown that high rating in the importance of athletics at a university results in higher scores in brand attachment and brand loyalty whereas academic importance only resulted in high scores in brand loyalty but not brand attachment (Wilks's $\lambda = .897$, $F(4, 139) = 3.992$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .103$.) Furthermore, the hierarchical linear regression shows that higher pre involvement results in higher post loyalty and post attachment after the manipulations. In addition, it shows that frequent social media use results in higher brand attachment and brand loyalty.

Overall, after running a few more data analyses, results show the participants gender and GPA are not an influential factor and therefore not relevant factors for the significance of data changes. In comparison, this study has shown that previous involvement tendencies matters and can predict changes in brand loyalty and brand attachment.

The repeated measure ANOVA results indicate that students who score high when answering question about the importance of academics as well as sports, show higher levels of increase in brand attachment and brand loyalty.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the data analysis has shown insignificant changes when testing the study's hypotheses MH1 and SH1. These results of the data analysis of MH1 indicate that there is no significance in the recorded data which means that MH1 cannot be supported. Therefore, the research has shown that there is no difference between the effects of emotional and rational message framing on brand attachment and brand loyalty. In fact, the rationally framed stories scored slightly higher in strengthening brand loyalty and brand attachment. However, the slight changes resulting from the data cannot be evaluated as significant and therefore could be attributed to chance.

In addition, the data that has been analyzed to test SH1 also shows only slight, and therefore insignificant, changes in the data. The data is insignificant, thus emotional sports content is, in fact, not more effective in strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty than rational academic content. Evidentially, looking at the results of the data more closely, the mean of the emotional academic story is slightly higher compared to the emotional sports story, and the mean of the rational sports story is slightly higher compared to rational academic story in relation to the involvement towards the brand. However, although this study mentions those findings, this experiment did not result in exclusively significant data changes.

Additionally, the second hypothesis (H2) foresees that higher congruence between message framing and contents will create stronger brand attachment and brand loyalty. A ANOVA test showed that message framing and message contents had no significant effects on brand loyalty or brand attachment. Therefore, it does not matter what content, academic vs. athletic, is chosen, or whether it is emotionally vs. rationally framed, to increase the level of

brand attachment and brand loyalty (please rewrite). It does, however, matter how involved people are with the university to begin with and how frequent they engage and use social media.

Overall, none of the hypothesis could be supported with significant data. In the following section of this discussion, possible reasons will be explored explaining the insignificant data changes resulting from this experiment. The goal is to draw conclusions using additional data in combination with the insights from the reviewed literature.

High levels of previous involvement with the university predict higher brand attachment and brand loyalty after reading any type of manipulated story. This study suggests that universities should direct their focus towards targeting towards students who rated academics or sports as highly important to strengthen their brand attachment and brand loyalty (i.e., by sending more marketing contents to selected and responsive target groups). Also, the results from the data analysis show that it is unlikely to strengthen the level of brand attachment and brand loyalty without the presence of preexisting involvement with a brand. Hence, no significant changes in the data, in terms of increasing levels of post brand attachment and brand loyalty, may indicate a lack of involvement between the university and the students. As mentioned in the literature review, universities early on developed a brand personality that stood out in the market among the wide range of competition (Rauschnabel, Krey & Babin, 2016). However, due to the findings, resulting from the data, the chosen university is not compatible with the students' values and therefore the preexisting involvement is tested low. Consumers evaluate brands that match their personality more positively than brand that do not (Govers & Mugge, 2004). Brand loyalty is considered to be based on the overlap of the consumer and the brand's values and intentions (Hossain & Sakib, 2016).

The results have shown that overall students did not evaluate the school very positively. However, the stronger a consumer, in this case the student, feels attached to a brand, the more likely is the perception of brand loyalty high. Relating this issue back to Zhang, Watson IV, Palmatier and Dant's (2016) study that focuses on the understanding of the effectiveness and the migration stages of consumer relationship marketing, the relationship between students and the university may be categorized as "damaged". The "damaged" stage indicated the lowest level of trust, commitment, norms, and predicts a high likelihood of terminating relationship (Zhang, Watson IV, Palmatier & Dant's, 2016). It is unlikely to maintain a long term relationship without the elements of connectivity and loyalty. Bock, Poole and Joseph (2014) suggest that high connectivity between an institution and the student create and strengthen students' loyalty towards an institution. If the principle connectivity foundation is not present, brand loyalty cannot to be existing either.

After running the data involving the students' ratings of academic importance it turned out that people who scored high on those items reported higher scores on brand loyalty compared to brand attachment. In comparison, students who rated sports as important scored high in brand loyalty and also in brand attachment. Assuming that students who are interested in sports also engage in sports events, this finding supports previous research stating that students who spend time engaging in university associated activities, such as a sports event, develop a stronger attachment towards the institution (Kim, Liu & Shan, 2017).

Another indicator for the insignificance in the effectiveness of athletic contents may be the lack of outstanding success in major sports at UNLV, such as football and basketball. According to Koo and Hardin (2008) the engagement and attachment between a sports spectator

and a specific sport varies in strength depending on the success of the team and degree of passion for the sport.

Furthermore, as briefly discussed earlier, the significance of the how frequently people engage and use social media in relation to the increase of brand attachment and brand loyalty. This finding ties back and directly relates to the findings of the reviewed literature. Online platforms create access to a constant information feeds that grabs people's attention and hooks them to the outlet (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013). The more people engage on social media, the higher is the personal investment and involvement towards the chosen social media content and therefore the attachment and loyalty increases. Social media turned into a platform lead by customer-generated content (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and connects like-minded people and compatible brands with their consumers on a virtual level. The principle of connectivity was also emphasized by van Dijck and Poell (2013) who describe the feeling of being connected in an online environment as effortless and as the opportunity to form a sense of belonging. Research has shown that the idea of connectivity also positively correlates with WOM. A high level emotional connectivity increases the effectiveness of WOM (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In other words, a complex set of online connections enables a more efficient exchange and transmission of information among consumers and enables the feeling of positive emotions throughout the process.

As previously discussed in the literature review, scholars suggest that students' satisfaction, trust and attachment are correlated with the brand image and brand identity; meaning that the perceived brand image can have a positive influence on the students' satisfaction, trust and attachment (Dennis, Papagiannidis, Alamanos, and Bourlakis, 2016). Therefore, the previous literature supports the unexpected outcome of evidence of this research.

Also, according to Ashley, Noble, Donthu and Lemon (2011), satisfaction can be evaluated as a predictor of relational marketing engagement. Highly satisfied consumers are more likely to engage in brand's marketing approaches. In other words, students who feels satisfied with the university's approach of creating engaging and profitable marketing programs, the stronger the participation and higher marketing outcome. Although the evidence was clearly present, the focus of this research had been on brand attachment and brand loyalty. However, brand involvement needs to be in the spotlight in order to predict and understand how to strengthen brand loyalty and brand attachment.

Filo, Lock & Karg's (2015) research suggests that sport fans utilize social media platforms to express fan ships and exchange emotions towards a sports brand though the online communities with the goal to gain positive reinforcement. Without connectivity there is no positive development of high levels of involvement, and therefore no brand attachment and brand loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the study was intended to find that emotional message framing will always be more effective than rational message framing in strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty. Furthermore, based on the reviewed literature about brand attachment in sports, the study predicted a higher respond in brand attachment and brand loyalty after being exposed to an emotional sports story compared to rational academic stories.

However, this study could not support any of the proposed hypothesis due to a lack of significance in the collected data. First of all, this research has shown that there is no difference between the effects of emotional and rational message framing on brand attachment and brand loyalty. Furthermore, emotional sports content is, in fact, not more effective in strengthening brand attachment and brand loyalty than rational academic content. Also, the data collected from this study shows that it does not matter what content, academic vs. athletic, is chosen, or whether it is emotionally vs. rationally framed, to increase the level of brand attachment and brand loyalty. In addition, high levels of previous involvement with the university predict higher brand attachment and brand loyalty after reading any type of manipulated story. Lastly, a high frequency of engagement and use of social media is highly related to the increase of brand attachment and brand loyalty.

Although, the findings were unexpected and the research's predictions were not met, the data revealed important findings regardless and the study turned out successful and credible. In addition, this research's finding support theories discussed in previous targeting congruence theories and the relations between brand involvement and brand attachment.

LIMITATIONS

After analyzing the data and considering all given circumstances of this experiment, this study presented multiple limitations. First of all, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas may be considered a commuter school. The number of students living on campus is relatively small. In comparison, larger universities, such as the University of Mississippi for example, are located in a college town and are associated with high numbers of on-campus activities and interactions with the students. Therefore, the degree of connectivity to the university at UNLV may not be as high as in other universities which may be an indicator for the insignificant changes in the brand loyalty and brand attachment variables. Also, this university is not recently known for outstanding prestigious athletic or academic programs.

In addition, it is important to point out that this study cannot be generalized for every school. As previously mentioned, depending on the size and reputation of the university and school spirit present on campus, the results of this research may differ if conducted at a different university. Another limitation may be the size of the data set. Although 101 participants is a respectable number for an experiment, larger datasets may be useful to record higher significances in data changes. Furthermore, the data was collected over a short period of time which means that long term effects of strengthening brand loyalty and brand attachment could not be accessed.

Also, this research was conducted in the Journalism and Media Studies and Communication Studies departments at UNLV. Students from these two departments are most likely educated in media related topics and are taught to view media contents critically, which could be an explanation for the insignificant data results. In addition, this study was conducted in a time span of less than two weeks in the end of March and beginning of April, the second half

of the semester. Hypothetically, the end of a semester is known to be more stressful than the beginning of an academic semester which might have been an influencing factor for this study. Another significant limitation when looking at the variables involvement, brand attachment and brand loyalty may be their similar characteristics.

As discussed previously in the literature review, research has found close connection between brand attachment and brand loyalty (Pedeliento, Andreini, Bergamaschi & Salo, 2016). Evidentially, the stronger a consumer feels attached to a brand, the more likely is the perception of brand loyalty high. Brand loyalty is also based on the overlap of the consumer's and the brand's values and intentions (Hossain & Sakib, 2016). However, the terms are defined similarly and their meanings slightly overlap which may lead to confusion when defining and clarifying terminologies and may mislead students' responses when answering the questions on the survey questionnaires.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This study's experimental design is suggested to be repeated at different, larger university. In particular, a considerably popular and prestigious universities known for its academic or athletic reputation may be selected to collect different datasets. It may be interesting to see if the size, reputation, academic or athletic success, and a larger numbers of students living on campus influences the research experiment's results.

It is also suggested to conduct the survey with adjusting and modifying the items and the manipulated content to see if the developed content has not been effective enough for significant data changes. As discussed in chapter 3, cultural differences all over the world count to one of the biggest challenges when creating a worldwide strongly appealing contents(Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999) which is why it is important to make adjustments to the content see, depending on the demographics on campus, what content may be the most effective for the future study compared to this original experiment.

Furthermore, this experiment may be conducted over a longer period of time to secure the collection of a larger datasets. Not only should the data collection be over a longer period of time, it should also be repeated during different times of the semester to see if the time within an academic influences the way students feel towards their university (i.e. beginning or end of spring vs. summer vs. winter semester). To target a different, non-media related audience, this study should be conducted in a department outside of Communications and Journalism and Media Studies. In addition, a different, or multiple other, media platform should be used for the manipulated story design. This design change could appeal to students' individual social media preferences more and may engage them more than the previously used LinkedIn story design. Using other, or even multiple, social media designs to display the manipulated story may also

add another research element to this study by exploring the effectiveness of different social media site.

APPENDIX A: STUDY QUESTIONNAIRES

The Effects Of Emotional Versus Rational Message Framing On Brand Attachment And Brand Loyalty

Instructions:

This study consists of six parts. Answer the following questions in part 1. Part 2 will entail a reading section where you are asked to read the presented promotional story thoroughly. Once you finished reading the story, proceed to parts 3-5 and answer the questions listed truthfully. Lastly, part 6 will ask you to answer demographic questions.

Part 1: Answer the following questions.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. This university is relevant to me.							
2. This university means a lot to me.							
3. The university is useful to me.							
4. The university is significant to me.							

5. I frequently buy university gear to represent my university.							
6. I am loyal towards the university.							
7. This university is my 'ideal' university.							
8. I feel strongly connected to the university.							
9. I would strongly regret it if the university would close down.							
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I would recommend this university to my friends/ family.							

Part 2: Read the following text thoroughly.

Group 1: Emotional Sports Story



UNLV Highlights

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Daring Rebel – Simon’s Road to Infinite Possibilities

UNLV – The place where ambition is the key and hard work is never left unrecognized. This week, the university recognizes Simon who is a pretty remarkable basketball player at UNLV. He is a 21-year old young man, definitely one of a kind, and is starting his senior year for the team. Simon started as a walk-on player his freshman year and has been loyal to his team ever since. His teammates describe Simon as energetic, competitive and a confident leader on and off the court. Although Simon is not a starter on the team, he is one of the most important players on the team due to his positive and thriving personality, according to the coaching staff. "Simon does everything he can to help his team, on and off the court, and that's why we love having him on the team," says the basketball head coach about this outstanding Rebel.



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Studies
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Tragically, Simon’s world turned upside down when he lost his parents in a tremendous car accident his junior year of college. Months of depression and a repetition of the question “Why? Why my parents?” followed and took its toll on Simon’s positivity and focus for the game of basketball. Broken on the inside and filled with grief, Simon shut himself away. After two months of deep mourning and putting life in perspective, Simon finally bounced back and started practicing with the team again.

After the accident, things have become very tough for Simon financially which is why he had no choice but to picked up a part-time job to cover his expenses. The beginning of his senior year, Simon was surprised by his teammates and coaches with the presentation of a full athletic scholarship covering all his academic costs for his last year of playing as a Running Rebel. All his dedication for the team and his will to continue to help his team wherever he could despite the tremendous setback in his life was recognized by the university and lead him to a full athletic scholarship. Now, Simon can direct his focus entirely on finishing up his last year as a Runnin’ Rebel with one worry less in his life.

The Rebel family has your back and looks out for you. Way to be a Rebel Simon!

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Group 2: Emotional Academic Story



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Daring Rebel – Simon’s Road to Infinite Possibilities

UNLV – The place where ambition is the key and hard work is never left unrecognized. This week, the university recognizes Simon who is an outstanding student and excellent leader at UNLV. He is a 21-year old young man, definitely one of a kind, and starting the final year of his undergraduate program. He enrolled in the university fresh out of high school and has been loyal to UNLV ever since. His professors describe Simon as “ambitious, engaged, smart and hard-working student.” Simon volunteers at many events on campus and goes above and beyond to help fellow students to succeed by putting in extra time for tutoring and counseling. His family is his greatest support system, and his parents taught him to care for others which is why it is so important to Simon to give back to the university community.



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Tragically, Simon's world turned upside down when he lost his parents in a tremendous car accident his junior year of college. Months of depression and a repetition of the question "Why? Why my parents?" followed and took its toll on Simon's positivity and ambition for academic excellence. Broken on the inside and filled with grief, Simon shut himself away. After two months of deep mourning and putting life in perspective, Simon finally bounced back and started volunteering on campus and thriving to excellence in his classes again.

After the accident, things have become very tough for Simon financially which is why he had no choice but to pick up a part-time job to cover his expenses. The beginning of his senior year, Simon was surprised by the university with the presentation of a full academic scholarship for the last year of his undergraduate program. All his dedication for the institution and his will to continue helping his fellow students wherever he can, despite the tremendous setback in his life, lead him to a full academic scholarship. Now, Simon can direct his undivided attention on finishing up his last academic year as an undergraduate student at UNLV with one worry less in his life.

The Rebel family has your back and looks out for you. Way to be a Rebel Simon!

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Group 3: Rational Sports Story



UNLV Highlights

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UNLV Athletics - Rebel of the Week

UNLV – Different. Daring. Diverse. This week, the university spotlights and recognizes Simon, a basketball player at UNLV. He is a 21-year old young starting the final year of his undergraduate basketball career. He has been an athlete for the university since his freshman year. Simon has been recognized for his achievements on the court multiple times including one All-Conference award, has been named player of the week five times in 3 years, as well as player of the month a total of 4 times, in the Mountain West Conference. Simon leads his team in 25.2 PTS (scoring points), with an average of 5.7 assists and records a significant amount of playing time for UNLV. He has also been awarded with the MVP (Most Valuable Player) award 2 years in a row (2017 and 2018). In addition, Simon remained healthy and fit, and has not missed a single game since his sophomore year of his Division I career.



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Simon's dedication for the team and his athletic success lead him to a full athletic scholarship which he received a for the last year of his basketball career as a Runnin' Rebel. Athletic scholarships are rare and only awarded to exceptional student-athletes which is why the university's television station featured Simon's success story in their latest campus news report episode.

Simon will graduate in the winter semester of 2019 and is planning on playing professionally. First and foremost, Simon is interested in playing in the NBA but can also imagine a professional career in Europe. Countries such as Italy, Turkey, Serbia and France are of interest for the Runnin' Rebel. Simon has not made a final decision yet as there is one more season to play and NCAA regulations restrict players from contacting professional institutions prior to graduation.

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Group 4: Rational Academic Story



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Student Rebel of the Week

UNLV – Different. Daring. Diverse. This week, the university spotlights and recognizes Simon, an academic scholar and undergraduate leader at UNLV. He is a 21-year old starting the final year of his undergraduate program. He has been attending the university since his freshman year. Simon has earned several honors and awards due to his academic excellence since he started his undergraduate degree at UNLV including the Academic Assessment Award and the Regent’s Scholar Award. Simon has maintained a 4.0 GPA since his freshman year and also volunteers for on-campus events to help and support fellow students by dedicating extra time for tutoring and counseling. Simon encourages others to give back to the university community and motivates fellow students to their follow academic dreams.



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UNLV recognizes outstanding student and rewards students like Simon with resources to push and prepare them for the future. That is why Simon received a full academic scholarship for the last year of his undergraduate degree. This exceptional academic success story has been featured in the latest university television news report episode and received campus-wide attention.

Simon will graduate in the winter semester of 2019 and already has multiple full-time job opportunity across the country lined up for him with the help of the university's job fair resources. UNLV continues to thrive to open up infinite opportunities for current and future Rebels and recognize outstanding achievements on campus.

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Part 3: Answer the following questions.

When you selected a university of your choice...

	<i>Very Unimportant</i>	<i>Unimportant</i>	<i>Slightly Unimportant</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Important</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. How important were academics to you?							
2. How important was the academic reputation of the university to you?							
3. How important was the location to you?							
4. How important was infrastructure and physical facility to you?							

5. How important were costs and tuition fees for you?							
6. How important was sports to you?							
7. How important was the success of the university's sports teams to you?							
8. How important is it to you to attend sports events?							
9. How important was it to you to be close to your family?							

10. How important was it to you to attend the same university as your friends?							
11. How important is your family's support to you during your academic career?							

Part 4: Answer the following questions.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. This university is relevant to me.							
2. This university means a lot to me.							
3. The university is useful to me.							
4. The university is significant to me.							
5. I frequently buy university gear to represent my university.							
6. I am loyal towards the university.							
7. This university is my 'ideal' university.							

8. I feel strongly connected to the university.							
9. I would strongly regret it if the university would close down.							
10. I would recommend this university to my friends/ family.							
11. I would share the story that I just read on my personal social media site.							

Part 5: Answer the following questions.

	<i>Never</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Daily</i>
Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. How often do you use social media?							
2. How often do you read the university's social media feeds? (e.g. Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)							
3. How often do you engage in promotional content published by the university? (e.g. retweet, share or like social media posts)							

4. How often do you talk about university news with fellow students/ friends or family?							
5. How often do you post contents about the university on your personal social media site(s) (including social media “check-ins” and location tags)?							
	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Slightly Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Slightly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. After reading the story, I think it is interesting.							

7. After reading the story, I think it is appealing.							
8. After reading the story, I want to know more about Simon.							
9. After reading the story, I feel proud being part of my university.							
10. After reading the story, I think it is boring.							

Part 6: Demographics

1. Age: What is your age?

a. _____ years old

2. Ethnicity (or Race): Please specify your ethnicity:

- a. Hispanic
- b. American Indian or Alaska Native
- c. Asian
- d. Black or African American
- e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- f. White
- g. Other (please specify):

h. Prefer not to respond

3. Gender: What is your gender?

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Transgender
- d. Other
- e. Prefer not to respond

4. Are you a transfer student?

- a. Yes
- b. No

5. What academic year are you in?

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior
- e. Other (please specify):

6. What is your current GPA?

APPENDIX B: SPSS DATA TABLES

Table 1: Descriptive Data

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	44	43.6	43.6	43.6
	Female	55	54.5	54.5	98.0
	Prefer not to respond	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Transgender	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

Ethnicity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Hispanic	15	14.9	14.9	14.9
	Asian	19	18.8	18.8	33.7
	Black or African American	15	14.9	14.9	48.5
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1.0	1.0	49.5
	White	34	33.7	33.7	83.2
	Prefer not to respond	1	1.0	1.0	84.2
	multiple	11	10.9	10.9	95.0
	others	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	100.0	

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