Logos, Ethos, Pathos and the Marketing of Higher Education

Abstract.

This article utilises rhetorical analysis as a method to investigate course level marketing communications for undergraduate fashion marketing degrees in England. The purpose of this method is to explore the persuasive appeals of Aristotle's triad of logos, ethos and pathos, how they are used and how these appeals could differ by university type. 16 course pages were analysed, with the analysis of course web pages shows a clear distinction between 'types' of university, with Post 92 institutions relying heavily on appeals to emotion (pathos) and giving more focus to 'value for money' that would be a concern to their students. Russell Group and Specialist universities rely more on appeals to ethos (credibility) and logos (fact/data) to market their courses. This research finds evidence of market segmentation, demonstrated through the different use of persuasive appeals to express the course focus, and giving insight to their target audience.

Keywords: Higher Education; Marketisation; Rhetorical Analysis; Fashion Marketing.

Logos, Ethos, Pathos and the Marketing of Higher Education.

Introduction

This study focuses on the rhetoric used in Higher Education (HE) course marketing via course webpages. The Kairos of this project is evident, as marketisation of HE takes a deeper and more entrenched position within the UK. The HE sector is more competitive than ever, with academic research exploring the impacts this has on pedagogy (Molesworth et al., 2009; Haywood et al., 2011), institutions (Newman and Jahdi, 2009; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2015), on academics (Sabri, 2013; Frakham, 2015) and the notion of students as consumers (Molesworth et al., 2009; Nixon et al., 2016, Budd, 2017). The student consumer debate has been further augmented by the introduction of the Office for Students[1] and the regulation of university and course marketing materials by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). 2017 has seen the first Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) return, with HEI's being rated as Gold, Silver and Bronze for teaching quality (www.hefce.ac.uk). Driven in part by the need to ensure institutions are giving the teaching of students' equal attention to their research endeavors. Institutions TEF submissions were a mix of quantitative data, and a narrative statements, with, in some cases, the narrative or discourse being key to an institution rising up the ratings (Bagshaw, 2017). The impact of these changes in the HE landscape further emphasises the opportunity to examine HE marketing with a focus on the rhetoric, and rhetorical appeals deployed to explore how HEI's are communicating their courses to prospective students. This paper takes an approach of rhetoric as a methodology through which we can observe phenomena. Utilising this approach, this study follows recent publications through which deeper understanding has been gained by the analysis of rhetoric deployed in

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[1] The OfS is a new public body, established in law by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

various situations (e.g. Online Narratives (Page and Mapstone, 2010), Presidential Speeches (Mshvenieradze, 2013), Corporate social responsibility reports (Higgins and Walker, 2012). The aim of this paper therefore, is to explore Aristotle's triad of persuasive appeals: Logos, Ethos and Pathos within course level marketing communications for bachelor's degrees in Fashion Marketing located in England.

The Marketisation of Higher Education

In recent years the term marketisation has been incorporated within the rhetoric of UK HEI's and HE policy. Marketisation of HE has been characterised by greater competition for the provision of student education, the raising of tuition fees and the changed landscape of public to private funding (Klemencic, 2014). Marketisation refers to the adoption of free market principles into HE, with business practices of cost-cutting, offering popular programmes and an increase in marketing of courses to increase 'sales and profit margins' (Hemsley–Brown, 2011). The HE sector is adopting marketing theories and concepts to gain a competitive edge (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Newman and Jahdi, 2009). This has called into question the purpose of the university education, with policy focusing on graduate earning premiums as an outcome of education (BIS, 2011), and universities wanting higher employability figures in order to boost rankings in league tables and market courses to prospective students accordingly (Budd, 2017). It is claimed some students view HE as necessary to enter their dream job, making the process more of a transaction (Molesworth *et al*., 2009), driven by a focus on employability, rather than learning (Barnett, 2011). Moreover, focusing on the student experience could give students unrealistic pictures of careers, and research has shown that students have an idealised view of chosen professions, focusing on the lifestyle of someone with that career, rather than the career itself (Haywood *et al*., 2011). This identification with

the more glamourous parts of career paths has been linked to the marketing of courses that focus only on the positive aspects of the certain vocation studied (Haywood *et al.,* 2011, p.190).

In 2010 the 'Browne Review[2]' highlighted the need for institutions to provide easy to access to information to enable students to make accurate judgements about their investments, and the policy aimed to make education more accessible for all. Research has shown that ill-informed decisions can impact negatively on students' success, engagement and retention (Vossensteyn *et al.* 2015; Naidoo *et al*., 2015). The further increase of student fees in England, and the prevailing impact of marketisation has ushered in the student consumer debate within research, as students are given rights as any consumer would when evaluating the service offer. Universities now have to consult guidelines from the CMA regulating the type of information that must be provided to students on course and university communications.

The student experience policy makes clear assumptions about the student, and relates to them as rational economic actors, however it is claimed there is ample evidence to suggest students are resistant to acting as rational consumers (Sabri, 2011; Raey et al, 2015; Nixon et al., 2016) and do not consult information such as National Student Survey (NSS) data when making their decisions on where to study (Harding, 2012), despite such information being of crucial importance in the marketing of HE, and to course teams (Lenton, 2015).

One size fits all?

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[2] Official title "Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Experience in England" (Browne, 2010).

While the impact of marketisation is well documented in literature, much research and policy documentation depicts students as a homogenous group who act as rational economic consumers in the process of deciding on their higher education (Sabri, 2011). This is not accurate on two levels, firstly research has evidenced students do not all act as 'rational consumers' (Sabri, 2011; Frankham, 2015) and many do not research teaching quality or employment outcomes at the time of making their choice. Secondly, both policy documentation and much academic research into marketisation and the 'student consumer' has ignored the fact that some students cannot access the 'free market' of education, and are constrained by their background and social capital, along with their academic credentials (Hemsley-Brown, 2011). Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds also have more fear of debt and place more emphasis on value for money (Callender and Jackson, 2008).

Proximity to home is a key factor affecting higher education choice for some students. Large scale empirical research by Callender and Jackson (2008) within the UK found that the fear of debt is a more prevalent influencer of university choice in those from lower socio-economic groups. Callender and Jackson (2008) also found that perceptions of the benefits of attending university had a large impact on student decision making, students who saw relatively few benefits of going to HE opted for strategies to keep their costs and debt low, such as living at home and taking on part time work. This suggests that universities should communicate the benefits of their courses highly through their marketing messages, particularly for those who are more price sensitive. For some this can limit both the available courses in the local area, but also access to some learning opportunities through socialisation with other groups of students, demonstrating that, even before the increase in fees (and debt) social mobility is 'predicated on geographical mobility' (Callender and Jackson, 2008, p. 410).

Research into market segmentation by Bonnema and van der Waldt (2008) focused on student recruitment marketing in the Cape Town region of South Africa. They identified five distinct sub-groups with segmentation variables, incomes and attitudes towards application to higher education finding that the different market segments identified relied on different sources of information, and valued different types of information when making their decisions. Research into UK students' decision making found university prestige is more influential than measures of programme quality (Morgan *et al*., 1999), whilst this study pre-dated the true era of marketisation, it remains true that prestigious universities tend to capitalise on such reputation in marketing communications (Sauntson and Morrish, 2011). A previous corpus linguistic analysis of mission statements of HEI's research found that those 'newer' universities of the million+ group prioritised words including 'student' 'learning and 'education' – showing their emphasis, over the Russell Group favouring terms like 'research' and 'world-leading' (Sauntson and Morrish, 2011). Showing some evidence of clear market positioning and a focus on a specific market segment with their communications. While these findings are illuminating, many predate the higher fee introduction and present an opportunity for an analysis of marketing messages within the more consumer driven and social media focused context.

Rhetoric in Marketing

The study of rhetoric within marketing communications is seeing a resurgence due to recent events in politics and the observation that we live in an age where communication must elicit an emotional response to be memorable (Hackley, 2018). A greater understanding of the use of rhetoric within marketing communications could ensure marketing studies are relevant to current 'marketing, advertising and branding practices in the age of social media' (Hackley, 2018, p. 1343). The word rhetoric has been viewed negatively with connotations of persuasion

and manipulation, however this current research views rhetoric as communication. In fact, true rhetors were heavily invested in understanding their audience before crafting their communications, allowing the audiences 'knowledge, mood, habits of thinking and communicating, hopes and fears, to act as resources for us in judging strategically the best way to move them to a particular place' (Miles and Nilsson, 2018, p. 1264). This fits within marketing, where a clear understanding of the target market is crucial in developing marketing communications that will resonate and define a message against competitors. The rhetorical tradition is concerned with the management of an audience's attention through communication in a competitive environment (Miles, 2018). The study of rhetoric is gathering momentum, but there remain opportunities to explore the 'principles and devises' of rhetoric in order to efficiently manage marketing communication (Tonks, 2018).

Within the HE research, the analysis of rhetoric and discourse is particularly prevalent in studies into policy documentation. Sabri, in a discourse analysis of educational policy texts, finds that the term 'student experience' has been heavily mentioned in documents only since 2009 coinciding with the introduction of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), after which the term is heavily referred to and there is an assertion that 'The Experience of the Student is at the heart of Higher Education' (Sabri, 2011). This policy discourse has also driven the proliferation of job roles specifically targeted at raising the student experience scores, such as 'Director for Student Experience', these roles have a focus on the measurement of student experience through NSS data (Sabri, 2013).

As marketing communication and strategy is dynamic, timing or 'Kairos' is key in understanding the 'right or opportune time to do something, or right measure in doing something" (Kinneavy, 1986, p.80). Within HE marketing it is clear the sector has adopted

marketing theories and concepts to gain a competitive edge (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Newman and Jahdi, 2009), bringing into question the role persuasion and rhetoric could play in the narrative given to students to encourage them to apply for courses at certain institutions. It has been argued that, 'Persuasion can be seen as a framing concept for marketing in general and for marketing management in particular. Persuasion is synonymous with rhetoric' (Tonks, 2002, p.806). In addition, rhetoric has another role as an 'instrument of discovery and sound judgement' (Simons, 1990, p.5) giving a tool through which to explore marketing communications within organisations.

Summary

The HE landscape is increasingly competitive, and the messaging used to become more and more regulated. In parallel, the student population is becoming more diverse and, as with any 'consumer' group will have differing needs and wants. In order to attract students, HE's have to develop methods of persuasive communication, as it is an important and central goal for any marketing or business function (Miles, 2014).

Marketing communication and rhetoric is deployed as 'consumers are not always sure of their wants or about what they are being offered and so are much more open to persuasion than is commonly acknowledged under the marketing concept' (Dickenson, Herbst and O'Shaughnessy, 1986, p. 18) It could be claimed that this could be particularly true of students, as potentially one of their biggest life decisions, but also acknowledging that for those from first to university families the information required to help in their decision making necessary could be quite different. This research therefore aims to explore this in more detail to understand how marketing rhetoric is utilised, through different message appeals, to attract

potential students and position the course within the competitive HE market. Institutions themselves are aware of their market position (or desired position), and respective students have differing needs and wants - therefore research on the communication within course marketing is necessary (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2015).

Research Design

The overarching research objective is to explore if there is evidence of market segmentation and positioning in the rhetoric deployed on course web pages at different types of intuitions. This will be explored through the following research objectives,

1 – How are the rhetorical appeals used within the communication of course level fashion marketing web pages?

2 - Do these persuasive appeals differ by university 'type' and how is this expressed?

Method

This research focuses on the segmentation of the HE market, the impact of which on marketing communications is largely under researched, therefore this research is interpretive, with its focus on 'interpretation, meaning and illumination' (Usher, 1990, p.18). Focusing on the rhetoric and message appeals used to market different fashion marketing courses will engage with "the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them" (Remenyi *et al*., 1998, p.35). The researcher understands her position to be subjective and shares the belief that reality is socially constructed (Saunders *et al*., 2009).

Rhetorical studies are concerned with how language and other symbolic forms are utilised to influence the audience, 'part of the job of a rhetorical analyst is to determine how constructions of "the real" are made persuasive' (Simons, 1990, p.11). Rhetorical analysis can be useful when looking at marketing communications as they can expose reasons for the underlying discourse that has impacted the information and the way it is presented (Hackley, 2018).

In the case of this research, policy changes and the increased competitive landscape has exposed a need for differentiation between courses, and has given some evidence of a market segmentation, with universities actively pursuing different 'target markets' of students. This research aims to explore use of persuasive language used in the marketing of undergraduate fashion marketing courses via their course webpages and will explicitly look for evidence of how Aristotle's 'triad' of rhetorical appeals to ethos (credibility), logos (fact/reason), and pathos (emotion) (Aristotle, 1981) are utilsed within the communication. The sender of the communication, in this case the website copy, will attempt to win the approval of the audience by appealing to them in three distinct ways, through ethos, pathos or logos (Aritstotle, 1981). This triad of rhetorical appeals can be visible when analysing marketing messages (Tonks, 2002, p. 813) and can be an analytical tool enabling researchers to appreciate how persuasion works on all three levels of rhetorical proof (Miles, 2014) that is 'highly nuanced and fundamentally strategic' (Miles and Nilsson, 2018, p. 1264). A rhetorical analysis is even relevant to the study of communications focusing on products (or services) which require a degree of involvement in decision making (Tonks, 2002), such as the choice of university and/or course.

For the purpose of this study, each appeal is defined as so; Ethos as the persona, or perceived character of the communicator[3], including their credibility and trustworthiness (Beason, 1991). If credibility is established then the communicator will be seen as more persuasive and the audience will respond (Mshvenieradze, 2013). Logos refers to the appeals to reason or fact (Mshvenieradze, 2013), Logos therefore expresses common sense and refers to the clarity of the argument, it can include data and statistics to bring forth a rational argument (Higgins and Walker, 2012). Finally, pathos, refers to appeals aimed at invoking audiences' feelings, and the triggering of emotions. For Burke (1969) this is achieved through identification, where the communication is able to show a relation to the needs, values and desires of the audience it targets (Higgins and Walker, 2012). According to Aristotle, 'pathos is the power with which the writer's message moves the audience to his or her desirable emotional action' (Mshvenieradze, 2013, P.1940). The text will be analysed to look for examples of distinction in the way different university types use different appeals.

Sample and Data Analysis

University websites are seen as key marketing and recruitment tools as they are highly influential and can be updated on a regular basis (Pampaloni 2010; Schimmel *et al.* 2010). They are also seen by most students when researching their chosen subject, course or university (Slack *et al*. 2014). Previous studies focused on student decision making have utilized web content, along with social media (Jan and Ammari, 2016; Royo-Vela and Hunerland, 2016; Bolat and O'Sullivan, 2017) and have found that the content presented positively impacts student choice. The use of web pages for this research also allows the research to include audio and visual message appeals, through course advertising videos or any other types of visual

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[3] In this context, the communicator being the university and course.

content. Fashion marketing is a course that usually sits within a business school or a creative/art and design school, as a result it is a hybrid of business/strategy and creative outcomes, attracting a diverse range of students and focuses on a highly competitive industry.

In order to find the relevant courses to include in the study, a search was initially made through Unistats[4] and UCAS[5], returning a sample of 16 English universities offering a course with Fashion Marketing in the title. Only those including these words were used for the sample, other fashion related degrees such as Fashion Design, Fashion Buying and Merchandising etc. were not included.[6] The course pages were accessed in April - May 2017, and only the text on the individual course page was used in the analysis. No information outside of the course page was analysed. The sample contained a total of 16 course pages, returning a corpus of 5856 words.

Previous research on mission statements of universities by Sauntson and Morrish (2011) used a corpus linguistic approach, to ascertain the repeated words, and groups of words, to understand the emphasis put on different values universities within the differing types of HEI hold (i.e. Russell Group, 1994 Group, Million+). Once the course pages were analysed individually, they were then analysed across university 'type', split into Post 92 universities, Specialist (arts focused universities ranked by the Global Fashion School ranking[7]) and Russell Group to explore any differences across the university 'type' in the message appeals they deploy.

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[4] https://unistats.direct.gov.uk/
[5] https://www.ucas.com
[6] Courses at Scottish and Welsh institutions were also excluded from the main analysis, due to the different funding landscape in the devolved nations. Course page data was located and saved between the 14th and 28th May 2017.
[7] https://www.businessoffashion.com/education/rankings/2016

As there was a context to the corpus of information, the language was interpreted within said context, following the view that persuasive discourse should consider the values of its chosen audience (Kuypers, 2009). The course pages were first analysed using a key word analysis, with all words used as adjectives when explicitly marketing the course coded and analysed through SPSS. This adjective list included 2323 words in total representing 39.5% of the overall corpus of words. The data were split by group (university 'type') and then a frequency analysis undertaken to define the most common words across the three groups (see table 1).

Inspired by the approach taken in Higgins and Walker's (2012) analysis of organization sustainability reports, the course pages were perused, taking into consideration all textual elements including format, visual images and written text. The pages were analysed as qualitative text, and scrutinized for examples of rhetorical appeals that were subsequently coded as appeals to Logos, Ethos or Pathos.

These were verified by an independent researcher to ensure they fit the definition of each appeal. These were then interpreted by university 'type' to identify any nuances between the messaging that could signify a market segmentation approach, either explicitly or subtlety. The appeals were then analysed to enable a deeper understanding of their use, and the potential desired outcomes. Following the analysis approach taken by Nørreklit (2003) this research provides examples into how these appeals are deployed across the university web pages and how these are slanted towards the specialisms of the university type included within this sample. This research comes from a social contructivist perspective and as such, as in the case of Nørreklit (2003), focuses on the dominating rhetorical aspects of the corpus and offers examples of the use of rhetoric in university marketing.

Findings

Firstly, an analysis of key and most common adjectives used across all the course pages within the sample. This was undertaken in order to determine any differences in the rhetoric used by universities from different types (and potentially targeting different students). As per Saunston and Morrish's (2011) research, there were distinct differences between the words used most frequently across the sample. The findings are split by Post 92, Russell Group (RG) and specialist institutions (Table 1) and ranked in order of most popular words used within the corpus of words on the course description on the degree page, including the % weighting of these adjectives within the total number of 2323 words identified as part of the key word analysis phase.

Table 1 Key adjectives used in order of frequency with percentage weighting

Post 92 n=951	Key Adj %	RG n=524	Key Adj. %	Specialist n=848	Key Adj. %
Industry	18%	Employability	11%	Industry	15%
Skills	15%	Theory	10%	Employability	8%
Employability	10%	Research	8%	Creative	7%
Business	8%	Industry	7%	Business	7%
Experience	6%	Skills	7%	Specialist	6%
International/Global	4%	Reputation	6%	Skills	6%
Creative	4%	Business	5%	Award-Winning	5%
Professionalism	4%	Creative	5%	Dynamic	5%
Knowledge	3%	Resources	5%	Ranking	5%
Practice	3%	Leading	5%	Innovative	5%

Resources	3%	Russell Group	5%	High-profile	3%

As seen in the above table, some of the words used were popular across all university pages, key words and phrases such as "Industry Links", "Skills", "Business", "Employability" and "Creative" were common and expected given the nature of the subject matter, and the prevailing policy discourse. However, there were some marked differences. Of the top 11 words, the course types showed at least 5 unique words per group.

Table 2 Unique key words per group

Post 92 Unique words	RG Unique words	Specialist Unique words
Experience	Theory	Specialist
International / Global	Research	Award-Winning
Professionalism	Reputation	Dynamic
Knowledge	Leading	Ranking
Practice	Russell Group	Innovative
		High-Profile

Considering the unique words as persuasive appeals there is a distinct focus on appeals to ethos or credibility as each type of university, and each course aims to prove its credibility in the fashion market. They do this in different ways, pulling on areas such as lecturer's industry experience (Post 92), theory and research (RG) and their specialism and award winning nature

(Specialist). Already there is an obvious difference in the type of universities and the individual words used, and are representative of the areas of focus such institutions would naturally put on the student experience. Having determined there are clear distinctions in the rhetoric used by different universities, the next step was to explore Aristotle's triad of persuasive appeals (Logos, Ethos, Pathos) and how these were evidenced throughout the course pages.

Appeals to Logos – Fact/Data

As earlier defined, logos refer to the use of facts and data in the presentation of persuasive message appeals. In regards to course advertising the table below (fig. 1) represents the ways in which logos is evidenced through the sample. The inclusion of certain data sources is compulsory and set by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and also influenced by the CMA.

Figure 1 Appeals to Logos

Appeal	Example of persuasive techniques - post 92	Example of persuasive techniques - RG	Example of persuasive techniques - spec
Logos (fact/data)	KIS data (compulsory)	KIS data (compulsory)	KIS data (compulsory)
	Overview of assessments % weightings	course content (list of modules)	course content (list of modules)
	% of scheduled teaching to independent study	Fees	Fees
	course content (list of modules)	Entry requirements - 128 UCAS points (average)	Entry requirements - 115 UCAS points (average)
	Additional course costs		
	Using KIS statistics as advertising		
	Fees		
	Entry requirements - 102 UCAS points (average)		
	Foundation year offered		

*In the United Kingdom, HEIs are already required to provide comparable information by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), called Key Information Sets (KISs) across similar undergraduate degree programmes (HEFCE 2012).

Within the compulsory Unistats data, there is a comprehensive overview of the course's performance across the different metrics HEI's are subject to. These include the top line and detailed NSS results and student destination data taken six months after graduation to see if they are employed in professional or managerial jobs. As this data can be seen as an example of logos, an inclusion of this data was taken into the analysis. The overall NSS satisfaction

scores, to which students are asked how satisfied with their course they were overall, were taken from each course page, split by group and averaged.

Table 3 Employment and NSS statistics

Employed in a Professional Role Score		NSS Overall Satisfaction Score	
Post 92	69%	Specialist	89%
Russell Group	75%	Post 92	81%
Specialist	73%	Russell Group	74%

In terms of the employment and destination of the graduates from the courses, those graduating from Russell Group based fashion marketing courses had the highest average percentage of graduates employed in professional jobs. However, this statistic across the board was very split in terms of geographic location, with those universities based in locations with a large amount of fashion related head offices having much higher percentages of managerial roles six months after graduation. While those graduating from RG universities gained more managerial roles, the student satisfaction scores from those institutions were the lowest in the sample, with 74% average overall satisfaction in comparison to 81% from the Post 92 group and 89% from the specialist institutions.

As with the key word analysis, there were differences in the type of university and the information given over and above the mandated information. This was most evidenced within the Post 92 institutions, with those pages giving more facts including additional course costs, and the amount of face to face teaching. This again shows evidence of market segmentation, with these institutions being more aware that their prospective students are more concerned with their return on investment and value for money, and therefore will want more detailed

information on their ratio of scheduled teaching to independent study, and also their additional expected costs. As, for these students, cost may be more of an issue if they are from lower income households. Another clear difference was the entry requirements, whilst perhaps not surprising as from previous research we would expect to see higher ranked institutions seeking the 'best' students. The highest average UCAS entry tariffs were the RG with 128, in comparison to the average Post 92 of 102. The majority within the post 92 sample also gave information on foundation years they offer to students who do not achieve the minimum requirements. Therefore, we can see in terms of the appeals to logos, there are differences with the amount of information that could be representative of the target student audience and is used to position the course accordingly.

Appeals to Ethos – Credibility

Appeals to ethos are largely defined by the establishing of the credibility of the communicator, in this context how the course seeks to attract students through establishing their credibility and/or reputation to show they are well placed to offer prospective students a positive experience. Figure 4 below shows the appeals to ethos prevalent within the sample, by university type.

Figure 2 Appeals to Ethos

Appeal	Example of persuasive techniques - post 92	Example of persuasive techniques - RG	Example of persuasive techniques - spec
Ethos (credibility)	industry collaboration in degree development	Ranking in University League tables	Ranking in Global Fashion School ranking
	Guest speakers	Russell group badging	Award winning course
	CIM/CMI accreditations	Reputation	Ranking in University League tables
	Student support/services	Research	Reputation
	Staff bios	Industry contacts/guest speakers	
	Academic-practitioner teaching staff	CIM/CMI accreditations	
	Ranking in Global Fashion School ranking (one)	"leading academics"	
	Focus on employment/employability		

In contrast to the logos appeals, there are less differences between the ethos appeals across university type. The major difference is represented through the communication of the quality of the courses. Many of the post 92 institutions, with less being ranked highly in traditional or specialist league tables[8], establish ethos through their close links to industry, with many explaining the courses have been developed with industry partners to ensure the delivery is relevant to future employability. There is a much more obvious focus on employment, industry and future careers throughout the post 92 web pages than the RG and specialist institutions, which again could be reflective the concerns of the traditional target student that may place more emphasis on their degree as a necessary route to employment.

Staff information was present throughout the sample, but with the Post 92 group these tended to be video based, or extended profiles that had the effect of humanising the pages and courses. The other difference was the emphasis placed on student support and services, such as careers advice, health, finance, counselling and study skills – all were more widely focused on within the sample of post 92 institutions.

In keeping with the focus of the institutions, the Russell Group sample focused on being part of the group, reputation in league tables and research, along with the term 'leading academics' in the field of fashion marketing. Similarly, ethos is established within the specialist group by the use of awards and international reputations for fashion education, along with an emphasis on accreditations. The ethos appeals within the Post 92 group tended to focus on close links to industry not only for student experience, but also for course development – placing a distinct

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[8] It is acknowledged by the author that the recent Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) results would impact this slightly, but due to data collection being undertaken before TEF results were available this was not included. It should also be noted that while TEF results will be informative, they will largely be placed on the universities main pages, rather than individual course pages as subject level TEF is not yet available.

emphasis on employment and relevance to industry wants and needs, with less emphasis towards academic and theoretical content.

Appeals to Pathos – Emotion.

Pathos is described as the invoking of emotion with the reader, and in that sense could be seen as the most powerful appeal in establishing a desired response from the targeted audience. Interestingly, while the different types of university deployed different ways of appealing to pathos, the desired result was similar, using identification to enable the student to picture themselves at that specific institution. All of the university types professed to their 'unique degree', which raises concerns to what students are able to understand and interpret based on the information given. There were some differences in terms of the focus of appeal and how it encourages identification with the course, as seen below in figure 3.

Figure 3 – Appeals to Pathos

Appeal Pathos (emotion)	Example of persuasive techniques - post 92	Example of persuasive techniques - RG	Example of persuasive techniques - spec
	Industry collaborations in live course projects	High quality teaching and learning	High employability rate
	Students as co-creators Use of "You" , "tailor your studies"	option to view course page in Chinese (one)	strong industry links
	work placement/internship opportunities	Graduate showcase event	Student work
	Student testimonials	Networking opportunities	Student testimonials
	Student work	"leading industry research resources"	"Unique Degree"
	work rooms and facilities (buildings/teaching spaces)	Alumni stories/destinations (quotes/videos)	Location
	Events - GFW/LFW/university graduate showcases	work placement/internship opportunities	
	Extra curricular (stores, creative agency, CIM chapter)	"Unique Degree"	
	"Unique Degree"	Location	
	Future careers		

Within the post 92 group, there was a distinct emphasis on buildings and facilities, showcasing images of workrooms and workspaces, along with purpose built buildings used for runway shows and final exhibits. These universities also focused more heavily on extra-curricular (value added) activities, such as university owned shops, excursions abroad and study trips, creative agencies and events in collaboration with accrediting bodies such as the Chartered

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Institute of Marketing (CIM) and Chartered Management Institute (CMI). Post 92 universities also made reference to students as being a large part of the educational experience, with the use of terms such as 'tailor your studies' to show that students are able to create their own areas of specialism with the teaching and assessment. There was also a focus on the student experience, in terms of international trips (with many accompanying images), graduate fashion week, outcomes of live briefs and industry speakers – all showcasing the excitement of the degree.

Student work and testimonials featured heavily on course pages within the post 92 and Specialist group, often with comments from students on their employability post-graduation and success stories. Alumni profiles, work placement examples from impressive organisations within the fashion industry, destinations of graduates, and stories directly from students as testimonials featured heavily across course pages from all university types, showing the importance for prospective students to gain perceived 'word of mouth' or 'peer to peer' communications from those studying or graduated.

As the courses are all fashion related, many showcased their presence at Graduate Fashion Week, the platform this gives students to access industry and showed images and shared their success stories of students winning competitions. This was most prevalent within the Post 92 sample, with the RG and Specialist groups, institutions focused on their own showcase events. There was still a focus on employability in the RG and specialist institutions, but this tended to be through alumni information, and where previous students are now working and in what positions.

One clear difference between the university types was the focus (or lack of) on location, this was used in the course pages of RG and specialist institutions, but only used on post 92 pages where the course was based in London. Most of the courses were situated in major capital cities across the UK with respectable fashion industries, but they did not use this as an appeal to pathos within the course information. This could suggest these courses are aware that a higher majority of their students come from a more local area (with the benefit of living at home to lower costs), negating the need to focus as much on the city itself as opposed to courses that attract a geographically diverse student body.

Discussion

The first objective of this research was to establish how rhetorical appeals are used within the communication of undergraduate fashion marketing courses. From the analysis is evident that all rhetorical appeals are used in combination on course pages for fashion marketing degrees. Common throughout is evidence of 'neo-liberal discourses' stemming from policy documentation and the impact of the marketisation of HE. This was expressed through the focus on the key areas of 'student experience' and 'employability' throughout all course pages.

The impact of marketisation, and the introduction of metrics to govern the information given to students has been blamed for giving students a 'consumerist' role in the HE landscape (Budd, 2017), with students entering HE in some cases to gain access to a dream job, making the view of education more transactional (Molesworth et al., 2009). While this has certainly had an impact on students' roles as 'consumers', from this analysis there is reason to suggest that courses are using appeals to future careers and aspirations as a way of appealing to pathos – perpetuating this view of education as access to employment. This, coupled with student

concern on graduate debt, and loan repayments, along with policy discourse has created a competitive market, within which individual courses must differentiate their courses to attract the right students.

In terms of the type of message appeals deployed, appeals to pathos were the most common way to show differentiation of courses, even though many offer the same emotional appeals. Pathos appeals were typically focused on engaging with the audiences' sense of identification, resonance and ideal self, with the intention of helping prospects to view themselves on that course, at that institution. As pathos is concerned with establishing the desired response from the audience, it would be the most valuable appeal in attracting students of this generation. This aligns with the view of Hackley (2018) suggesting that we live in an 'age of pathos' and that in marketing 'communication that does not elicit an emotional response is quickly forgotten' (p. 1343).

In terms of the most common words used across the sample the most common across all types were, "Industry Links", "Employability", "Skills", "Business", "Creative" and "Resources"; showing a clear focus on terms derived from policy papers and discourses that position students as 'rational consumers' (i.e. Sabri, 2011; Frankham, 2015; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2016). However, when broken down by university type, we start to see evidence of segmentation of the market, as highlighted by Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2016) with words appealing to the student group the course is targeting. Words used by Russell Group universities "Theory", "Research", "Reputation", "Leading" and "Russell Group" reinforce the academic credibility and history of these courses (ethos), which is further underpinned by the UCAS points required by students to enter these courses (logos). Creating a sense of academic accomplishment to consider applying to these traditional universities. The specialist

institutions focused on words related to their credibility within the fashion market, showing their prowess through words such as "Specialist", "Award-winning", "Dynamic", "Ranking", "Innovative" and "High-Profile". Giving a sense of their standing as exclusive institutions with global reputations (ethos) for their fashion programmes and successful alumni, reflected in the type of students they attract with both creative and academic talent.

Appeals to pathos might be the only real appeal that the individual course team can effectively 'control' within their communications. Logos tends to be set by the university (and in some cases tightly regulated due to concerns about the CMA), and is dominated by compulsory information such as NSS and employment information. Ethos is largely pre-determined by the university's offering as a whole, their history and reputation. This is an appeal that works more effectively for those Russell Group universities, with their academic credibility, and the specialist group with their fashion industry credibility as desirable 'brands'. Course awards and accreditations, along with staff bios can be influenced but again these cannot be fully controlled by individual courses.

The second research objective was to utilize the benefits of a rhetorical analysis to examine if message appeals differed by university type, and there was clear evidence of this throughout the sample, showing a clear picture of a segmented HE market, as found in South Africa by Bonnema and van der Waldt (2008), and positioning of courses to their expected or desired target market.

In terms of the appeals most used, these varied by university type. There was a clear trend of Post-92 institutions giving more information on their course pages, and in all three categories of rhetorical appeals. The appeals to ethos or credibility were heavily relied on by Post 92

institutions but were expressed in different ways, such as through industry links and engagement rather than research prowess (RG) or fashion credibility (specialist).

Pathos appeals varied between institutions and post 92 institutions focused on 'value added' activities, with a subtext of focusing on student populations that were less geographically mobile, by showcasing on campus activities within which students can gain valuable work experience without having to take on unpaid internships that maybe beyond their financial capabilities. Student experience was emphasised through these appeals more than any others, again to entice action for students to want to be part of the course and identify with the course trips, external speakers and activities. The focus on the more 'exciting' elements of the course, over the academic learning shows evidence of the concerns brought by Haywood et al., (2001) that students expect to only learn the 'glamourous' side of the subject and are not expecting the degree to be hard work. This perception could cloud students judgment and give them an idealised view of their prospective university experience or career aspirations. This also perpetuates the student as consumer debate by promising experiences that students then come to expect and judge their satisfaction on.

While previously stated logos appeals are by their own definition facts or data about the courses, that include compulsory data that all courses must show. However, there was a clear difference with the amount of additional information on costs of extra-curricular activities and materials, along with more information on type of assessments within the Post 92 group. It was also prevalent in appeals to ethos, with post 92 institutions again stressing their support services and employability. Within pathos appeals, emphasis placed on experiences such as trips, and 'value added' extra-curricular activities aimed at showing the benefits of an education at that HEI for those who could be more concerned about value for money or return on investment.

For the post-92 institutions, the student body could be more local, the grade entry typically lower (as seen in the average UCAS entry tariffs), in contrast to those applying to Russell Group courses and specialist institutions, with higher academic qualifications and who would be more likely to relocate in order to attend a more prestigious university (Callender and Jackson, 2008).

While information from NSS and employment data might be key for those who have access to the 'free market' to make their decisions about university, others will be constrained by their backgrounds and so will opt for a local institution. The lack of use of location as an appeal to Pathos within the post 92 group is representative of this, coupled with a focus on additional course costs, value-added examples and opportunities for students to gain valuable experience from on-campus activities speaks to the concerns of their traditional markets. As well as differing by university type in terms of location as an appeal, location may also have an impact on the graduate employability data that is displayed on all course pages and through Unistats. As institutions with lower rates of managerial or professional employment after six months of graduations tended to be based in locations where there are less fashion based organisations, and higher retail presence. Retail based jobs would fall into the non-professional category and maybe the only option for location bound students so soon after graduation.

The NSS information, under logos appeals, evidenced a mixed reaction in comparison to previous literature that has stated students could have a bias towards being more critical of institutions that they perceive should be 'excellent' (Maringe, 2011) and as a result rate them lower than a student who may have had low expectations of an institution. This can be applied to the Russell Group within the sample, that had the lowest NSS average of 74%. However Lenton (2015) found the more 'traditional' universities tend to score more highly due to the

"reputational element of the degree" (p. 121). While the Russell Group scored the lowest, the specialist institutions were highest with an overall satisfaction average of 89%, but fall into Lenton's (2015) view that students would be well aware of the prestige of these institutions within the global fashion industry.

While the Russell Group had the lowest overall satisfaction rates, they had the highest managerial employment rates. This could be due to their more traditional focus on research, theory and critical thinking rather than on the 'student experience' elements that make student projects appear to be more applied rather than theoretical. While these elements may impact on satisfaction (as previous research has found students often identify only with the glamourous sides of education and forget engaging with theoretical rather than applied learning is often painful (Barnett, 2011)), the skills they develop and the reputation of the HEI might impact the students' ability to gain graduate employment in managerial roles. However, this would also be influenced by the student profile, of those more advanced students, who have higher UCAS points on entry and who are going to a higher ranking institution.

The NSS and employment data do not take into consideration the starting point of the student, and also their ability to be geographically mobile both during and after university in order to secure their managerial or professional roles. As stated in the literature, students from lower socio-economic profiles are constrained by their background, social capital, location and their academic credentials (Hemsley-Brown, 2011). This could also impact their degree studies as for those from lower socio-economic profiles often hold part time jobs and live at home (Callender and Jackson, 2008). By taking part time work, or living at home students may miss out on some of the trips, unpaid internships or networking opportunities (that are used as appeals on RG university pages) that could help them gain professional graduate employment.

Post 92 institutions put more emphasis on guest speakers and university based experiences (such as experiential learning through pop up shops and student led businesses), that would be accessible to students from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Conclusion

This research was intended as an exploration into the marketing of higher education, the use of rhetoric as a method was designed to expose differences in communication and how institutions position themselves towards their target market of prospective students. This follows a recent resurgence in marketing rhetoric and adds to knowledge around how rhetorical analysis can be used to look deeper into marketing communications in the social media age.

Within HE marketing research (and policy measurement tools) there is a prevailing discourse of students being treated as a homogenous group, however there is clearly evidence of market segmentation, and within this different message appeals towards students' needs, wants and concerns. This research was limited by its small sample of one course type, wider research should focus on a variety of courses to look for further evidence. However it is clear that there is a focus on the exciting elements of courses, in some cases over the academic experience. There is also an emphasis, in many cases, of the course being a passport to employment, rather than focusing on the learning experience. This calls into question whether courses are painting an unrealistic picture of the difficulty of the academic content by glamourising the course content. The impact of fees on different student market segments perceptions of their experience could also be an interesting research angle, with research largely ignoring the value that students from differing socio-economic background place on their education, and how this impacts their overall satisfaction at the end of the degree. Research on NSS data by Lenton

(2015) found that NSS scores are on average higher in Scotland, supporting the view that 'students' expectations of teaching quality are higher where they are aware of paying fees' (p.122). While Scottish institutions were excluded from this study, an analysis of a course page showed far less information than those from England, perhaps suggesting less of a consumerist orientation among these student prospects.

Further research on student consumers, and the roles of universities in a post-marketised landscape should recognise these differences and explore any contrasts. Research with a body of prospective students could also indicate the effectiveness of message appeals on student perceptions and likelihood to apply.

While it has been claimed that students do not always place much weight on Unistats data when making their decisions (Harding, 2002), further research is important to explore the different needs and wants students have and understand their conceptualisations of value in order to understand how to clearly position courses for recruitment, and also how to best deliver them to increase overall student satisfaction and employability. The use of rhetorical analysis here as a method has contributed to understanding of how courses are being positioned. Further research within this area could help us to further understand potential students and create marketing communications that will ensure a realistic portrayal of a university experience.

Word count – 7725

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