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CULTURAL BRANDING: AN EXAMINATION OF WEBSITE MARKETING
PRACTICES AT HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
AND NON-HBCU BLACK SERVING INSTITUTIONS

by

James Michael Hudson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School,
the College of Education and Human Sciences
and the School of Education
at The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference between the way that higher education marketing professionals at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions (BSIs) use website marketing techniques for institutional branding. This examination was prompted by Gasman (2007) who suggested that the inability of some HBCUs to garner and/or maintain sufficient enrollment numbers stems from poor image management. Further, Gibbs (2015) suggested that a comparison between HBCU websites and Traditionally White Institution (TWI) websites might be beneficial. Thus, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1. Is there a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ2. Is there a difference in the degree of access that students have to recommended content on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ3. Is there a difference in the image marketing practices used by education marketing professionals at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

An instrument, modeled after the scoresheet of Harper (2001), was developed for the purpose of rating access to 18 content items and representation of 6 racial groups. Data were collected by three raters from the homepages of the college websites of 54 institutions located in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina (26 HBCUs and 28 non-HBCU BSIs). A one-way ANOVA was used to answer research question one. Research question two and three were assessed using a logistic regression. Results indicated that while there is not a significant difference in the number of desired content items available

between HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs, there is a significant difference in the individual access to about sections, application deadlines, visitation requests, mail requests, and information about programs. Additionally, there was found to be a significant difference in homepage representation of Hispanics.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the educators who acknowledged my worth, recognized my potential, and cultivated my holistic growth.

Carnice Smith, you were the first person who informed me that my circumstance did not dictate my chance. You taught me that my past did not have to control my future and that every day presents an opportunity for me to live my best life. I'll always remember you telling me that I alone am responsible for my attitude and actions. Thank you for sharing your wisdom.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSI   Black Serving Institution

DAGMAR   Design Advertising Goals for Measuring

                             Advertising

HBCU   Historically Black Colleges and Universities

PWI   Predominately White Institution

TWI   Traditionally White Institution

SPSS   Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have provided educational

opportunities to African Americans for nearly 200 years (Dorn, 2013; LeMelle, 2002;

Lovett, 2011). The initial purpose of many of the early HBCUs, which at the time were

referred to as institutes or schools, was to educate the estimated four million newly freed

slaves and their descendants (LeMelle, 2002; Sissoko & Shiau, 2005). Prior to this time,

many states had compulsory ignorance laws in place that outlawed the practice of

educating slaves (Donnelly, 2008) While there were no institutions of higher learning for

Blacks in the South prior to 1865, a small number of Black Colleges and Universities

were founded in the North prior to 1865 by various missionary groups; the first of these

that still enrolls students, originally known as the Institution for Colored Youth, was

founded in 1837 and is now named Cheney State University. After the Civil War, several

Blacks from the north along with missionaries, clergy, teachers, and members of

President Lincoln's Freedmen's Bureau heeded the call to provide educational

opportunities at these newly established institutions (Brown & Davis, 2001; Donnelly,

2008).

In 1862, Senator Justin Morrill introduced the First Morrill Land Grant College

Act which provided funds for the development of institutions of higher learning that

would focus on teaching abstract liberal arts curricula (Duemer, 2007). One HBCU,

Alcorn State University, was established as a result of the first Morrill Act. Twenty-eight

years later, Morrill enacted the Second Morrill Act which had a much more significant

impact on the education of African Americans as it stipulated that funds be used to create

institutions that provided educational opportunities for both Whites and Blacks. A

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secondary option was that funds might be allocated for the development of academic alternatives for Blacks in lieu of admission to White colleges (Lightcap, 2004). As a result, sixteen land grant HBCUs were founded in the south (Stevenson, 2003.

In 1896, the Supreme Court issued a ruling in one of the first of many court cases that would affect the education of African Americans, *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The ruling established the concept of "separate but equal." *Plessy v. Ferguson* promoted a focus on teacher training at Black colleges to educate instructors who could teach at segregated schools. Thereafter, several additional cases would be argued calling for an end to segregation. It was established in the case of *Sinuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma* in 1948, that schools must be available for Blacks as soon as they are made available for Whites. Shortly thereafter, in the 1950 case of *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, it was decided that Blacks should receive the same treatment as whites. That same year, the ruling of *Sweatt v. Painter* added that states be required to provide both Blacks and Whites with facilities of comparable quality (U.S. Dept. of Education). According to Esters and Strayhorn (2012) the impact of these rulings was minimal as many HBCUs continued to have resources unequal to those of their Predominantly White Institution (PWI) counterparts. Because of this, the Supreme Court, in *Brown v. Board of Education*, rejected the doctrine of "separate but equal" in 1954 requiring instead that White colleges integrate.

In 1965, according to the Higher Education Act of 1965, HBCU's became defined as "any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans" (p. 132). The act also stipulates that the institution must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting

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agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority. However, Federal regulation (20 USC 1061 (2) stipulates that an institution may also be considered an HBCU if a branch campus of a southern institution of higher educations received a grant as an institution with special needs prior to September 30, 1986 and has been formally recognized by the National Center for Education Statistics as a HBCU.

Since the inception of HBCUs, there has been ambivalence regarding the purpose, curriculum, and continued relevance of HBCUs (Minor, 2004; Reid, 2011; Scott, 2002). Behind this ambivalence has been a myriad of questions regarding whether they should exist, what type of education they should provide, and what their role is at a social, economic, and political level (Dorn, 2013; Reid, 2011). While the purpose of HBCUs was initially tied to the idea that education is a privilege that all Americans should be allowed, the type of education best suited for Blacks was often debated. One of the most widely recognized of these debates is that between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B Du Bois. Washington proposed that an industrial education would be of greatest value to Blacks while Dubois was in favor of a classical education. It was with the publication of his book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, in 1903, that Du Bois publicly rejected Washington's philosophy. Industrial education was very cost efficient and taught former slaves to be compliant workers who got to work on time and worked hard—similar to the subservient roles they had very recently escaped. This form of education was thought to appease Blacks while simultaneously keeping them mentally enslaved as well as alienated (Aboh & Lomotey, 2009). Du Bois proposed that this was not indicative of liberation and supported the liberal arts education as one that was more suitable for upward socioeconomic projection. Because of this, many liberal arts colleges were opened to

provide Blacks with classical education. Nonetheless, Du Bois and Washington did agree that there were long-term benefits associated with HBCUs. These benefits were linked to HBCUs providing a means by which Blacks might remain connected to historical and cultural traditions of African Americans. Additionally, HBCUs would be charged with providing black leadership, an economic center in the Black community, encouraging role models, and graduates with specialized research and institutional training (Brown & Davis, 2001; Brown & Ricard, 2007). Even so, these institutions have often lacked resources comparable to those found at PWIs. Thus, the quality of the education received at HBCUs has received much criticism (Dorn, 2013).

According to the 2018 report of the Department of Education's White House HBCU Initiative, there are 102 HBCUs, most of which provide undergraduate and graduate degrees, and continue to enroll African Americans as well as members of other ethnic groups. Researchers (Allen, 1992; Culpepper, 2010; Mann, 2011; Stevenson, 2013) suggested that the continued interest in acquiring an education at an HBCU stems from a sense of duty as HBCUs were previously charged with maintaining African American culture and tradition while creating leaders and spokespersons for the community (Brown & Davis, 2001). For example, many African Americans attend HBCU's because it is a tradition in their family or they believe that there is some form of cultural benefit to attending an HBCU (Mann, 2011).

Nonetheless, many report there is a negative stigma associated with obtaining an education at an HBCU. According to Toldson (2016) many of the enrollment issues at HBCUs stem from a funding gap that needs to be addressed as it has caused somewhat of a caste system in higher education. The poor reputation of many HBCUs coupled with

access to PWI enrollment after legal desegregation ended in the 1960s allowed for many African Americans to begin enrolling at PWIs, which caused a subsequent decline in enrollment at HBCUs (Lyles, 2013). Because of this, many argue that HBCUs are no longer relevant. An additional suggestion is that if HBCUs must remain open and active, that they should revamp their missions, and become more inclusive.

Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965 not only provided a system for classifying HBCUs, it also allowed for other minority serving institutions to be categorized. These institutions were labeled based on historic function or percentage of minorities being served by those institutions (Flores & Park, 2015). Consequently, minority-serving institutions including HBCUs, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American and Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions began to merit researcher interest. Motivated by legal mandates and the clear social, financial, and political benefits, many PWIs began implementation of recruitment measures with minorities as a target audience. Some of these institutions were so successful in their efforts that their percentage of minority enrollment qualified them to be considered minority serving. By definition, those institutions that enroll 25% or more African Americans with no greater percentage of any other minorities are considered African American-Serving Institutions or Black-Serving Institutions (Acker, 2010). Previous research suggested that many African Americans had a difficult time adjusting to the campus culture at PWIs (Brown & Davis, 2001; Jones & Williams, 2006; Neville, Heppner, & Wang, 1997; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2007) So the question emerges, why are so many Blacks choosing TWIs over HBCUs?

Gasman (2007) suggests that the loss of enrollment numbers at HBCUs to PWIs can be mostly attributed to a perpetuation of negative image attached to HBCUs. According to Gasman (2007), the HBCUs that do well typically have received bad publicity on fewer occasions than smaller HBCUs that lack sufficient funding, have resources available to promote positive aspects of the institution, and do so in a strategic manner. Gasman proposes that many HBCUs lack the marketing resources necessary to compete with their PWI counterparts and subsequently lose potential students. However, there is limited information about marketing practices of HBCUs as well as Black-Serving Institutions in general.

<div align="center">Institutional Identity and Image</div>

Gasman's (2006) assertion that the inability of some HBCUs to garner and/or maintain sufficient enrollment numbers stems from poor image management and prompts an examination of institutional image. While some researchers (Belanger, Mount, & Wilson, 2002; Topor, 1986) have used the terms institutional identity and institutional image interchangeably, they are actually quite different. Institutional identity is based on the strategically developed "identity" or distinctions that the institution's founders and/or current stakeholders understand and wish to perpetuate (Whitting, 2006). Institutional identity is supported through the purposeful practices of the institution in regard to mission statements, curriculum offerings, recruitment strategies, and marketing efforts (Whitting, 2006).

In 1985, Albert and Whetten discussed organizational identity which established the foundation of institutional identity research. They proposed that organizational identity includes three factors: employee perceptions of central attributes, employee

perceptions of what makes the organization distinct, and employee perceptions of

enduring facets of the organization that remain constant regardless of objective changes.

Albert and Whetten's theory builds on the work of Patchen (1970) who proposed that

identity includes feelings of solidarity with the organization, attitudinal and behavioral

support, and perception of shared characteristics. Thus, the identity of an organization is

critical as it allows for an alignment of human interaction and organizational framework

(Ashforth & Dutton, 2000). Additionally, institutional identity plays a major role in

employee satisfaction and behavior that can impact organization productivity (Albert et

al., 2000; Ashfort & Mael, 1989; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

Institutional image, however, is how non-employee stakeholders including

potential faculty, staff, and students as well as parents and other community members

(Bromley, 2002; Terkla & Pagano, 1993; Yang & Grunig, 2005) perceive the institution.

Institutional image is generally dictated by individual perspectives and can be influenced

by tangible and intangible facets including what can be observed from media outlets,

personal communications, actual cost of attendance, academic reputation, athletic

accomplishments, campus appearance, and location (Grunig & Hung, 2002; Kazoleas et

al., 2001). Several researchers suggest that institutional image is important as it has the

capacity to impact recruitment, retention, and loyalty (Bromley, 2002; Gotsi & Wilson,

2001; Grunig & Hung, 2002).

A key contributor to an institution's ability to manage its image comes in the form

of various marketing strategies. Research suggests that institutions of higher learning

have been using marketing approaches such as media-based advertising and direct mail

for over 100 (Cutlip, 1971; Simmons & Lacznick, 2015). The use of marketing practices

in higher education is said to have been motivated by a decline in enrollment (Buresch, 1994; Gaither, 1979; Simmon, 2004; Strang, 1986). The lack of active marketing at institutions of higher learning, churches, and hospitals alike suggested that marketing was believed to be unnecessary for non–profit organizations such as colleges and universities. The earlier idea of Fram (1975) was reemphasized by Kotler and Fox (1995), who proposed that administrators at institutions of higher learning assumed that the value of education was obvious and they consequently put very little effort into marketing strategies including advertisement. Fram (1975) and Vaccero (1979) both presented literature urging the use of marketing strategies at institutions of higher learning long before marketing higher education became popular. Andreasen (1979) went so far as to assert that non-profits do not have an option in regard to marketing simply because of their function. The only choice as he saw it was whether non-profit organizations would market well or poorly (Andreasen, 1979).

The adoption of marketing practices, commonly associated with commercial companies, by marketing professionals at institutions of higher learning has been extensively discussed by researchers (Anctil, 2008; Bok, 2003; Cooper, 2014 Hurt, 2012; Kotler & Fox, 1985; Zhang & O'Halloran, 2013). Ultimately, this practice picked up momentum in response to an increase in completion for students toward the end of the 1970s (Paulsen, 1990). Shortly thereafter, Litten (1980) coined the term "academic marketing." Since then, many institutions have employed full-time marketing professionals, full staffs, or external marketing firms to develop marketing material to bolster enrollment (Hanover Research, 2014). Some institutions have gone as far as

hiring marketing professionals for individual academic branches such as law schools, business colleges, medical schools, etc. (Blumenstyk, 2006).

The primary goal of many of these marketing professionals is to create and/or reinforce a university brand by way of various advertising practices (Blumenstyk, 2006; Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Lidia, 2015). Images that imply that an institution offers what their target audiences' desire such as rigorous academic programs, successful athletic teams, and meaningful extracurricular opportunities are often showcased on the college website (Saichaie, 2011). Some academics criticize the marketization of higher education as it is seen as a step away from the traditional social uplift mission (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Nonetheless, authors such as Anctil (2008) propose that for the modern institution of higher education, the image of an institution is crucial and of greater importance than even academic quality.

Advertisement as a function of marketing involves calling public attention to the products and or services offered by an organization via announcements in print, broadcast, or electronic media (Arens & Bovee, 1994). Advertisements have often been presented as a form of recruitment on campus during athletic events and during recruitment visits both on and off campus. Additionally, institutional recruitment and marketing professionals have worked to disseminate various advertisements during school visits or via electronic mediums such as radio, television, and the internet. Direct interpersonal forms of advertisement have been shared in the form of alumni organization magazines, newspaper advertisements, and brochures that are mailed out periodically (Kittle, 2000). Many of these efforts are motivated by the idea that advertisements impact institutional image and institutional image in turn affects enrollment (Pegoraro, 2006).

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Marketing efforts have been found to have a positive impact on enrollment so much so that Albright (1986) proposed that marketing activities such as advertising are synonymous with enrollment management. Maguire (1976) however, was the first noted author to label enrollment management as a process that involves active recruitment which in turn includes forms of marketing such as advertising. Hosler (1984) defined enrollment management as any action that influences student body characteristics. He suggested that these actions were most often based on efforts of those working in recruitment and marketing department.

<div align="center">Theoretical Overview</div>

The theory of organizational impression management was used as a guiding framework for understanding the branding practices of marketing professionals at the institutions participating in this study. According to Massey (2003), organizational impression management involves various actions taken by organizational leadership in an effort to maintain, create, and occasionally regain a desired image. While this theory can be directly linked to impression management theory, the origins can be traced back to Aristotle's presentation of ethos in 4th Century, B.C. (Kennedy, 1991). According to Aristotle, source credibility is based on expertise and trustworthiness.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

While there has been research that examines marketing strategies such as advertising practices at HBCUs, there exists limited research that examines institutional branding as a particular function of marketing and no known study focuses on the branding of Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The bulk of the research that examines marketing at HBCUs also focuses on student perspectives rather that of

higher education marketing professionals. Although the student perspective is a valuable portion of marketing research, it may be equally valuable to identify motivations and limitations for strategies implemented by marketing professionals.

In regard to branding as a function of marketing at non-HBCU Black-Serving Institutions, no research has been found. Studies that acknowledged the existence of non-HBCU Black-Serving Institutions often include these institutions in analyses of other Minority-Serving Institutions rather than focusing on them specifically. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain if there are differences between the approaches and outcomes at HBCUs and non-HBCU Black-Serving Institutions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a difference between the way that HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs use internet marketing techniques for institutional branding. These techniques include image marketing techniques as well as content marketing techniques.

Research Questions

RQ1. Is there a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ2. Is there a difference in the degree of access that students have to recommended content on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ3. Is there a difference in the image marketing practices used by education marketing professionals at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

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Justification

The current study provided much needed information for practitioners and researchers in the fields of higher education and marketing alike. Mass communication theorists have posited for many years that marketing and branding efforts play a major role in impacting customer interest and loyalty. While much research has focused on the continued relevance of HBCUs and found them to be comparable to other institutional types in regard to value and impact, few studies focus on marketing practices that may aid in sustaining HBCUs and enhance their ability to increase enrollment. Hence, this research may filled a void in the literature regarding branding as a marketing practice that may have implications for image management and subsequent enrollment outcomes. Examination of non-HBCU Black-Serving Institutions will provide additional scholarly benefit as there are no known studies that examine these institutions individually rather than in conjunction with other minority-serving institutions.

In addition to filling gaps in the literature, this study provided additional information regarding current trends in branding efforts at both HBCUs and non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions. As practices of both HBCUs and non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions will be examined and compared, contrasts in practices can be examined to form hypotheses on best practices. This information can be used to inform practitioners regarding strategies and resource allocations.

Definition of Terms

Advertisement - a form of mass communication with the purpose to direct information at customers in a way that helps them develop positive attitudes about a product or service and ultimately convinces them to act favorably toward an organization (Colley, 1961).

Black Serving Institution (BSI) - institutions whose student population includes at least 25% or more African Americans with no greater percentage of any other racial minority group (Acker, 2010). These institutions are also considered Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs).

Educational Marketing Professionals – individuals employed by institutions of higher learning and charged with the task of planning and implementing marketing strategies and tactics on behalf of the institution.

Enrollment Management – the process of developing and implementing strategies and tactics to shape the enrollment of an institution while meeting distinctive goals set by institutional leaders (Hope, 2017)

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) – Institutions that were established prior to 1964 for the purpose of educating Black students.

Institutional Branding – the use of advertising, promotion, and other enrollment management strategies to create an institutional image that allows an institution to stand out as different from other institutions.

Institutional Identity - distinctions that the institution's founders and/or current stakeholders understand and wish to perpetuate via the purposeful practices of the institution regarding mission statements, curriculum offerings, recruitment strategies, and marketing efforts (Whitting, 2006).

Institutional Image – The way in which non-employee stakeholders including potential faculty, staff, and students as well as parents and other community members (Bromley, 2002; Terkla & Pagano, 1993; Yang and Grunig, 2005) perceive an institution of higher learning.

Predominantly White Institution (PWI) - Institutions of higher education where the majority of the student body (at least 50%) is comprised of students who racially identify as White/Caucasian (Fortune, 2015).

Traditionally-White Institution (TWI) – institutions that were established for the purpose of educating White students while denying entry to individuals from racial minority groups (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002).

Delimitations

This study was delimited in that the researcher focused on institutional website of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSI's in three states—Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. This decision was made as it is not feasible to examine the websites of all HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs. However, the three states that were examined have the greatest number of HBCUs in the nation and an equally great number of non-HBCU BSIs which allows for a balance of sample groups. In addition to the fact that this study focused on institutions in three states, only those institutions that were regionally accredited, offer four-year degree programs, and provide housing options were included in the study. This decision was made as research suggests that accreditation status, academic programs, and housing options are some of the top-ranked considerations of incoming freshmen (Gibbs, 2015; Tate, 2017).

This study did not consider the amount of institutional resources allocated toward a marketing budget. Additionally, there was not a focus on whether the website was developed and/or managed by a campus employee or by a person or group hired from an outside organization. It should be noted that some institutions included in the study were at the cusp of the BSI qualifying bracket (having the minimum Black enrollment

requirement for consideration). As student population demographics have the capacity to quickly change, some institutions will qualify for this study during one semester but may not qualify for inclusion during the following semester. This study focuses on those institutions that met all criteria throughout the 2017-2018 academic calendar year.

Limitations

Considering the nature of this study, there were various limitations that may have an impact on the research outcomes. According to Creswell (2015) the limitations of a study may include study designs that can have a negative impact on the results and may also impact the researcher's ability to generalize study outcomes. As this study will examine the content and images found on the websites of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs that fit the established criteria in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina only, there are limitations associated with the selected sample, data collection methods, and focus of the study.

The study sample included HBCUs and Non-HBCU BSIs in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. While there are HBCUs and Non-HBCU BSIs in other states, purposeful sampling was deemed necessary as it was impractical to include all HBCUs and Non-HBCU BSIs. Due to varying characteristic of these institutions including location, diversity of target audiences, overall student demographics, and program availability, this study may not be applicable to institutions outside of these states and/or institutional type. It is also important to note that the available sample included a significantly greater number of private institutions than public institutions which also limited the scope of the study.

There are two limitations associated with the examination of websites in particular rather than other marketing instruments. Firstly, one on the advantages of using a website as a marketing tool is the fact that website content and design can be easily changed and/or updated. Websites can change dramatically over a period of time based on administration preference, creative freedom of marketing professionals, and/or availability of resources. This fact presents a limitation in that this is not a longitudinal study so websites were not examined multiple times over an extended period. Additionally, only the content and images that are available on the homepage of the websites was considered. As such, generalizations cannot be made about the entire marketing strategies of those institutions included in the study.

Due to the nature and focus of this study, the researcher played a major role in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. According to Pauwels (2010), studies that involve the examination of pictures may be limited in that the research does not always have contextual knowledge associated with the images. Additionally, Blowes (2006) proposed that others may not always associate the same meaning to images. This study did not take into consideration whether the website was developed and/or maintained by a full-time internal marketing professional or by an external marketing firm. Furthermore, the interpretation of website images and/or content may not be a true reflection of campus culture or institutional focus.

<div align="center">Assumptions</div>

According to Wargo (2015), assumptions are statements that while in some cases are only temporary, are considered to be true, and have the capacity to produce valid results. Thus, the following assumptions were considered and accepted during this study.

In regard to the instrument that was developed for use during this study, the researcher assumed that the instrument was both valid and reliable. This means that the instrument would produce results consistent with the nature of the study. Additionally, the instrument should produce similar results if used by other researchers in the future. It is also assumed that all included institutions met the established criteria at the time of the study and that none of the information found online to verify eligibility had been falsified. Lastly, it was assumed that the content and images included on the homepage of each website are a true representation of the marketing strategy in place at the respective institutions and that no major alterations were made to any of the included websites during data collection.

CHAPTER II – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are more than 18 million undergraduate students currently enrolled at degree granting institutions across the United States. Approximately 2.4 million of these students self-identify as African American. While many African American students choose to attend HBCUs, which were founded for the specific purpose of educating African American, even more elect to attend PWIs. This phenomenon has resulted in many HBCUs struggling to maintain sufficient enrollment. In contrast, this has had a positive impact on many PWIs seeking to diversify their student populations. Efforts to recruit African Americans have been so successful that many PWIs have garnered a large enough African American population that they can be designated Black-Serving Institutions (BSIs).

According to Gasman (2007), the inability of some HBCUs to achieve high enrollment numbers is due to negative messages in the media and a flawed approach to impression management. Gasman suggests that marketing professionals at HBCUs should work to counter these potential adverse messages with public relations and positive advertisement messages. Branding efforts should paint a picture based on institutional identity to attract students to the various cultural and academic factors that institutions wish to promote.

In the following literature review, literature related to institutional branding at HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs was examined through the lens of organizational impression management. Institutional marketing in general will be discussed followed by an examination of what the literature says regarding the impact of institutional identity and subsequent branding efforts. As Gasman points to image and reputation as

contributors to declines in enrollment at HBCUs, these factors will also be considered and discussed. College choice will be discussed in the context of how branding might influence choice outcomes.

<center>Organizational Impression Management</center>

The main theory guiding this study is organizational image management theory. The theory of organizational image management provides a guiding framework for understanding the advertisement development and implementation practices of marketing professionals at the institutions participating in this study. This was deemed appropriate as the tasks of such professionals are typically performed in an effort to maintain a positive image and subsequently attract and retain students. According to Massey (2003), organizational image management involves various actions taken by organizational leadership in an effort to maintain, create, and occasionally regain a desired image.

Goffman's examination of source credibility resulted in impression management theory which suggests that all individuals, regardless of expertise or level of trustworthiness, participate in a process of managing their public identity. A part of this management process may involve presenting what is called an "idealized performance" which is the presentation of an image that is contrary to reality. This image may work to make the person look better or worse depending on the audience. Goffman also speaks of "the crucial point," the point during an interaction when an unintended gesture inadvertently causes receivers to form an undesirable perception.

Goffman's research prompted a great deal of follow-up research in the field of communications at the interpersonal and organizational levels. Schneider (1969) proposed that people typically make decisions regarding what parts of themselves to

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present and how to do so based on motivation to garner respect and approval. Schlenker (1980) presented the idea that along with the idea of wanting a sense of respect and approval, individuals also tend to feel rewarded by a sense of pride and accomplishment if they successfully present their ideal selves. Both Chen, Shecter and Chaiken (1996) and DePaulo et al. (1996) suggest that individuals will go as far as falsifying information in an effort to present a socially acceptable self. Chen, Shecter, and Chaiken (1996) in particular assert that people desire a feeling of consensus which drives a bandwagon type approach to self-presentation.

Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989) published a text that presented a culmination of research that examined impression management theory in an organizational context. This research focused both on individuals within the organization as well as how their work impacted the overall organizational image. Similar to many other organizations, institutions of higher education thrive based on the beliefs of stakeholders regarding the quality and usefulness of the institution. Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989) suggest that just as individuals feel the need to paint a positive picture of themselves for respect and approval, organizations must establish and maintain positive impressions in an effort to succeed. Thus, organizations must present themselves in a way that lines up with what they want stakeholders to believe about them. A big part of this is controlled by public relations efforts.

As the intended study sought to examine institutional image, impression management theory was used within an organizational context (organizational image management) that allows for better conceptualization of motivations for marketing practices that directly influence institutional image.

Marketing in Higher Education

Branding is critical as a function of an overall institutional marketing plan. Kotler (1975), one of the leading authors providing major works urging the use of marketing tactics for institutions of higher learning and other non-profit organizations, posited that the development of comprehensive and strategic marketing plans is necessary for the continued success of any business. According to Kotler and Levy (1969) admissions representatives at institutions of higher learning used various marketing practices decades prior to the release of any notable research on the topic. For example, Bok (2003) noted that the University of Chicago used various advertising practices during the early 1900s. Around this same time, the University of Pennsylvania founded what they referred to as the "Bureau of Publicity" (p. 2). Nonetheless, due to a negative stigma associated with commercializing higher education, many institutions refrained from adopting an official strategic approach to advertising or marketing in general. In the late 60s and early 70s; however, several authors began to write in support of marketing higher education.

Much of the early work prompting the use of marketing efforts by institutions of higher learning pointed to enrollment management as a chief motivator (Gaither, 1979; Krachenber, 1992; Pressley, 1978; Trivett 1974). Krachenber (1972) proposed that marketing would be the best tool to enable institutions to attract target audiences. These target audiences would thereafter be placed in a position where specific needs could be met in an efficient manner. Additional arguments in support of marketing higher education included the notion that it was the civic duty of institutional leaders to help potential students understand the key attributes associated with attending a particular institution over another.

Although much of what is known about institutional marketing comes from research in the 1980s, revisiting this topic is warranted in the current climate of downward enrollment shifts and increased competition for a smaller number of potential students. It is important to note that marketing research in the 80s presented a wealth of information regarding marketing motivation, plan development, program critiques, and specialized plans. Doescher (1986) posited that the greatest motivation for advertising in higher education was the decline in overall enrollment. Strang (1986) echoed this sentiment by proposing that marketing be used to help reach enrollment goals.

Blanton (1981) presented one of the first comparative examinations of marketing in higher education focused on perspectives of target audiences in regard to developing efficient marketing plans. It focused on students, their parents, faculty, and faculty from feeder schools. Firoz (1982) was one of the first marketing researchers to examine activities of the practitioner rather than the marketing outcomes or feedback from targeted audiences. Questionnaires were sent to more than 500 institutions. His research presented information regarding collaboration issues within the campus community.

Shortly thereafter, Goldgehn (1982) developed a marketing plan assessment that allowed institutions to evaluate the quality of their marketing plans at private colleges. Goldehn's research was similar to that of Kotler. However, he also created a list of guidelines for institutions to follow in regard to marketing strategies. This list included: defining the collegiate mission; identifying publics and markets; researching needs, wants, and perceptions of markets; differentiating market segments; choosing which segments to serve; defining the institution's niche; evaluating product, price, place, and promotion for development of marketing plan; and lastly implementation and control of

marketing plan. Taylor (1984) proposed a similar marketing model for urban universities suggesting particulars such as: self-assessment, research, consideration of resources, and development of a strategic marketing plan, implementation, and evaluation.

Again borrowing from the initial research in this area, it was noted that many additional step-based marketing strategies were presented in the years following (Barlar, 1987; Topping 1989; Tsai, 1986). Tsai's (1986) step-based strategy included: institutional restructuring, development of marketing information systems, marketing segmentation, research, positioning, formulation, mix determination, and evaluation. Barlar (1987) suggests that commitment, involvement, organization, information, and concentration are essential for a successful marketing plan. These items doubled as justification for previous failures in marketing efforts as she suggested many faculty members had no interest in supporting marketing efforts

A number of authors have focused on various specialized forms of marketing that are suggested for institutions of higher learning where traditional forms of marketing were not being practiced. These forms may be motivation based, focus of the marketing plan, or on the marketing tools. Taylor and Reed (1995) propose what has been coined as situational marketing, while authors including Kotler and Armstrong (2010) along with Newman, Stem, and Sprott (2004) and Edmiston-Stasser (2009) promoted integrated marketing. Additionally, Klassen (2000) supported niche marketing. Taylor and Reed (1995) sought to support a claim for situational marketing as there was still much pushback regarding the necessity of advertising by academic institutions. Their claim involved the proposition that students be looked at as one of a number of environmental forces.

Adler and Hayes (1986) suggested that the key to proper advertising is presentation of a consistent message. It is not enough to promote positive messages via media outlets; these messages must line up with institutional and consumer reality. As a result, several researchers promoted what has been termed Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). Kotler and Armstrong (1996) defined integrated marketing as systematic efforts wherein an institution of higher learning structures their marketing efforts in a consistently clear and compelling manner that is directly linked to the institutions established identity. Edmiston-Strasser (2009) further elaborated by adding that Integrated Marketing Communications involve a strategic process of preparing, developing, implementing, and accessing brand communications over an extended period of time. This process involves both internal and external audiences. Edmiston-Strasser also stressed an importance of integrating all communication channels including advertising, public relations, and direct marketing. This practice allows the presentation of a consistent message that is purposeful and targeted. Newman et al. (2004) proposed that integrated marketing is especially important for institutions of higher learning as clear and consistent messages are the best method for attracting students in a marketplace filled with so many options. Kotler and Armstrong (1996) further discussed marketing of institution of higher learning by suggesting emphasis on cost, leadership, differentiation, and focus.

<div align="center">Advertising Higher Education</div>

Colley (1961) presented one of the first major works on advertising goals and coined the acronym DAGMAR (Designing Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results). He labeled advertising a form of mass communication and suggested that the

ultimate purpose was to direct information at customers in a way that helped them develop positive attitudes about a product or service and ultimately convinced them to act favorably toward an organization. Colley discusses four stages of commercial communication: awareness, comprehension, conviction, and action.

Dutka (1995) used the foundational work of Colley (1961) as a framework for establishing what he thought should be the goals of all advertisement plans. He noted that goals should have measurable results, be agreed upon by all internal stakeholders, have benchmarks, and be measured against opportunities.

According to Rotzoll and Haefner (1996) while there is little real evidence to support the effectiveness of advertising efforts, advertisers are often blamed or praised for the outcome. Rotzoll and Haefner propose that advertising enables potential customers to shift from indecision to decision. Dutka (1995) adds that advertising is critical as promotion of products and services is a central aspect of any marketing plan. He further expounded by suggesting that advertising can be presented in a plethora of manners including but not limited to sampling, gifts, sweepstakes, coupons, price packs, subsidized financing, and promotion via media-based outlets such as radio, television, and print. Dtuka (1995) concluded that advertising is the mechanism that ultimately prompts a customer to make a definitive decision.

Although there have been several studies performed to examine advertising efforts of marketing professionals in a multitude of fields, it has been often noted that the effects are difficult to measure. This may be in part due to the large number of factors that play a role in human decision making. Nonetheless, advertising has been and continues to be a profitable business.

Research on attitudes towards advertising in higher education, however, suggest that in the past, many college students resented advertisement efforts (Beard, 2003) Beard (2003) states that based on the research of previous advertising researchers (Haller, 1974 and Larkin, (1977), students believed that advertisers were dishonest about what they could offer and insulting potential patrons in their efforts. Larkin (1977) added that many students ultimately become irritated with the notion that companies were trying to force goods and services on them that were not needed or wanted.

College Choice

Several college administrators have become concerned with institutional image and how the impressions of stakeholders, including parents, investors, and media representatives, may play a role in potential student decision making (Nadelson, Semmelroth, Martinez, Featherstone, Fuhriman & Sell, 2013; Wilkins & Huisman, 2014; Wood & Harrison, 2014). Therefore, the literature on college choice is extensive. Research topics include articles that focus on the unique experiences and motivations of undergraduates (Cabrera & Nasa, 2000; Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Litten, 1982; Perna, 2006), graduate students (Kallio, 1995; Sia, 2011), women (Smyth & McArdle, 2004; Ware & Lee, 1988) international students (Maringe, 2006; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Shanka, Quintal, & Taylor, 2006), Asians Americans (Kim & Gasman, 2011; Teranishi, Ceja, Antonio, Allen, & McDonough, 2004), Hispanics (Perez & McDonough, 2008; Tagart & Crisp, 2011), and African Americans (Freeman, 1999; McDonough, Antonio, & Trent, 1997; Sevier, 1993). College choice has even been examined in regard to college and program type (Anderson, 2010).

Corey (1936) first discussed college choice in regard to what factors influenced the selection habits of traditional students. He was one of the first authors to categorize influences in response to examining recruitment strategies. After reviewing college catalogs, Corey established that many institutions were advertising faculty, programs, athletics, facilities, and various aspects of campus culture and social life as a means of attracting potential students. Factors related to academic programs, student organizations, and extracurricular activities were promoted based on what administrators thought was most important. In an effort to determine if the factors potential students cared most about were correlated with each other, Corey interviewed 143 freshmen students and established that student influences could be broken into three categories including student-based factors, high school culture, and college characteristics. Corey's model of student-based factors included race, gender, socioeconomic status, and relational influences. High school culture played a role in terms of how often and to what degree college was promoted in the high school setting. The availability of college preparation resources was also considered. College characteristics that were considered included institution location, reputation, and available programs.

One of the first authors to provide a model of college choice, Chapman (1981), provided a list of influences affecting college choice. This list was developed in an effort to assist with the development of recruitment policies that could potentially increase enrollment. In the same article, Chapman also examined the influence of printed materials on college choice. Characteristics included in the examination were socioeconomic status, student academic propensity, goals, as well as previous academic successes. The results indicated that student considerations typically centered on the

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influence of family and peers, location and cost programs, communication efforts by the institution, and overall college life expectations. Chapman also found that printed materials were important but may have been written at too high a level for the students who were targeted.

Shortly thereafter, Litten (1982) published an article that also focused on college choice. Similar to Chapman, Litten developed a model for college recruitment strategies. His method of data collection however, was a bit different from that of Chapman. Litten reviewed previous college-choice research with the intent of determining what the college-choice process entailed for prospective students rather than the decision itself. As a result, Litten produced a three-phase model and proposed that while different authors have listed several various factors that may be considered by students pursuing higher education, each factor can typically be included in one of three broader categories: financial benefit, social considerations, and cultural considerations. The first of these, financial benefit, can be explained more thoroughly using the human capital theory. According to Paulsen (2001) human capital is the productive capacities afforded to individuals through the acquisition of knowledge and skill that can be gained over time. When applied to college choice, human capital theory would suggest that students go through a process of evaluating the return on investment that they will receive compared to the cost incurred while attending one particular institution over another (Mixon, 1992; Mixon & Hsing, 1994; Paulsen, 2001; Tuckman, 1970;). Cost incurred is not limited to simply the money paid for tuition, housing, and fees. Cost also includes the sacrifice of money that could have been earned had a student elected to go straight into the work force rather than attending college.

As part of social consideration, students are thought to consider the status attainment theory which suggests that the social status of potential students' parents has a great impact on college choice (Duncan, Featherman, & Duncan, 1972). In this situation, family income as well as whether the parents attended college and to what extent, play a major role in the self-image of students. Subsequently, a students' decision to apply to one college over another may be influenced by family resources and/or expectation. For instance, if a student has very successful parents who earned graduate degrees from prestigious institutions, this student may be more likely to apply to a prestigious institution. In contrast, a student who has a parent who graduated from a community college or didn't graduate at all may feel limited to pursuing an education at a community college or a small four-year institution.

Cultural capital, which has often been paired with social capital (Garcia, 2014; Martin & Spenner, 2009; Musoba & Baez, 2009; Nora, 2004) was proposed by Bourdieu (1977) and postulates that there is a class struggle that is perpetuated in society. Basically, those who come from upper class homes have an advantage in many social, academic, and professional arenas, over those who come from mid-low socioeconomic backgrounds (Amond, 2007; Kurleander, 2007). For those students who are able to attend and graduate from more prestigious institutions, their cultural capital is considered greater. Thus, institution image and an institutions place in the ranking systems, play a major role in college choice.

Similar to Chapman (1981) and Litten (1982), Jackson (1982), presented a model to boost enrollment at institutions of higher learning. His model went a bit further, however, and provided suggestions for recruitment as well as retention. Additionally, his

model was not limited to individual institutions but was aimed at impacting public policy. Like Litten, Jackson's model included distinct categories: preference, exclusion, and evaluation. Preference is a label for students' academic and professional aspirations. Jackson suggested that student aspirations were affected by family background and previous personal achievements. Exclusion was a label for those factors that might impact college access. Those factors included: ability to finance education, ability to gain information, and academic motivation. Evaluation was a label for the process of selecting a particular institution once a college is recognized as a feasible option. In response to Jackson's research, Litten developed a list of nine specific factors that he deemed most important and that institutional leaders could focus on. These factors included: public subsidy, institution location, academic programs, academic resources, general financial aid options, targeted aid, general information, specific information, and overall institutional quality.

The work of Chapman (1981), Litten (1982) and Jackson (1982) greatly influenced the work of many other college-choice researchers. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) used the research of several previous authors, including Chapman, to develop a model that spanned the entire college-choice process from predisposition, to search, and choice. Predisposition involves the whole process of considering college and determining whether it is needed for a student's desired career path. The second stage is the search stage. The search stage entails reviewing options and submitting application packets for acceptance. The final stage is the choice stage. This stage could be relatively lengthy and take place during other stages as Hossler, Schmit, and Vesper (1999) asserted that students begin considering college choice around the 7th grade.

As noted by Chapman (1981), Litten (1982), Jackson (1982), Hossler and Gallagher (1987) alike, institutional quality or the perception of quality is a consistent factor impacting college choice. Erdman (1983) suggested that college reputation is one of the most important factors noted by potential students when determining whether they would choose one institution over another. A question of how image impacts college choice appears in the literature again in the mid-1990s. Canale (1996) sought to determine which particular characteristic contributed to college selection. As a result of his study, he identified that the five most-noted factors influencing college selection were the cost, the quality of the faculty, diversity of programs, and academic reputation. A 2000 study conducted by Cabrera and La Nasa, cited institutional quality, diversity of programs, cost, and campus life as a major deciding factor in college selection. Cabrera et al. added that institutional quality is often measured by an array of considerations including advertising promotional, word of mouth, and the U.S. and World Report ranking system.

An additional theme found more recently in college choice research is the impact of parent perception. Thompson (1990) proposes that perception about universities is typically developed by a combination of factors that include general knowledge, personal experience during visits and/or interactions with representatives, as well as perceptions of others. Thompson (1990) suggests that parents in particular have a major influence on the decision-making process. This work led to a study by Sztam (2003) that included an examination of the perceptions of both students and their parents. As a result, the author suggested that advertisements should appeal to potential student and parents alike. He pointed out that students have several choices and several competing messages that make

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it imperative that institutions provide some guidance. Otherwise, according to Davies and Guppy (1997) students may feel as if their options are unlimited.

In 1996, Lynch conducted a qualitative study to determine the effectiveness of strategies used for recruiting African American students. This study, unlike many before and since, examined the perspectives of both students and higher education professionals during data collection. This study was one of the first to discuss the significance of parental influence.

Literature that focuses on college choice influences for African Americans in particular, typically focuses on race-related reasons. According to Van Camp, Barden, and Sloan (2010), this is one of the major factors for African Americans who choose HBCUs over PWIs. Years prior, Lynch (2004) proposed that African American students are most often interested in campus life which included availability and diversity of social activities, representation of African Americans in faculty and staff as well as student population, and availability of student support services. The bulk of this is due to the notion held by some that college should provide not only academic opportunity but also opportunities for meaningful camaraderie. This factor has also been noted as a major consideration for African Americans in particular. Additionally, as discussed in a 2006 study conducted by Braddock and Hua, reputation is one of the top ranked contributing factors of African American when considering potential colleges.

Institutional Identity

Zaghloul and AlMarzouki (2010) have labeled institutional image a cornerstone of influence for college choice. The foundational basis for much of the reviewed literature on institutional identity stems from the organizational identity research

performed by Albert and Whetten (1985). Their research suggested that organizational

identity and corporate identity were two entirely different paradigms as organizational

identity focused on internal influences. As a result of their research, Albert and Whetten

determined that facets of organizational identity are most notably linked to central,

distinctive, and enduring aspects of an organization. They also suggested that

organizations could potentially have dual identities or even multiple identities. This is

particularly relevant for institutions of higher learning as they have multiple functions

and subsequently would have multiple identities.

According to Gioia (1998), there are three distinct philosophical traditions that

underpin the examination of organizational identity. These include: functionalist,

interpretative, and post-modern factors. The functionalist tradition centers on the

examination of identity as a social fact. The interpretative tradition focuses on how

employees develop perspectives regarding their role in their organization. This is relative

to higher education institutional identity in that employees, both faculty and staff, play a

major role in shaping student perception of institutional quality. Post-modern tradition

involves power relationships within the organization. In terms of organizational

leadership, this facet could drastically impact administrators' decisions regarding identity

development as well as image management.

Contrary to Albert and Whetten, Gioio, Schultz, and Corley (2000) proposed that

organizational identity is fluid and changes when necessary. These researchers proposed

that identity and image are strongly related. Additionally, they suggested that there is a

reciprocal relationship between identity and image. They also asserted that contrary to the

perspective of many previous researchers, identity is rather unstable as organizational

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members can and may frequently redefine organizational identity. Gioia et al. (2000) added that the fluid nature of identity is greatly impacted by its connection to image, which will be discussed later in this document. Balmer and Wilson (1998) echoed their sentiment with the proposal that a more appropriate term might be "evolving." Balmer and Wilson (1998) added that higher education has a perceived identity that is connected to the members understanding of mission, purpose, and culture. This particular identity may differ minimally or significantly from what is actually central, distinctive, and enduring in the organization. In regard to culture, Cailloux (2014) proposed that the student population has an impact on institutional identity. Wayne (2013) added that institutional identity may often be based on religious affiliation. A recent study conducted at a Catholic university provided support for how closely tied institutional identity is to institutional mission. The study participants were all employees at the institution and most of the respondents, 91%, considered the mission to be "important." One respondent in particular, labeled the mission "the foundation of everything we do" (Naumann, 2015, p. 92). Although much of the research on institutional identity has focused on private or religious institution types, Driggers (2016) proposed that institutional identity may also be developed and maintained for extended periods of time at public institutions.

Identity provides a system by which human action can be explained and accounted for within the framework of an organization (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000). Dutton, Duckerich and Harguail, (1994) suggested that organizational identity grants organizational employees a sense of identity and grants them a means of directing their behaviors within the organization. This concept is based on the ideas presented in Patchen's (1970) identification theory. According to his theory, employees must ask

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themselves who they are in relation to their organization. Patchen (1970) suggested that organizational identification includes employees' perception of shared characteristic, attitudinal and behavioral support, as well as feelings of solidarity. Albert et al. (2000) proposed that organizational identification has a direct impact on employee behavior and can subsequently influence employee interactions with current and potential students.

<center>Institutional Image</center>

As noted by organizational impression management theorists and many researchers of organizational leadership (Garner & Avolio, 1998; Gioio & Chittipeddi, 1991; Han Ming Chng et al., 2015; Pfeffer, 1981), the ability to manage impressions and play a role in developing institutional image is imperative for the survival of any organization. Terkla and Pagano (1993) suggested that image, similar to identity, is based in large part on perception. Image is complex however, in that each individual within a target audience may have a completely different perception about the quality of an institution's image (Angulo-Ruiz & Pergelova, 2013). Nonetheless, Topor (1986) asserted that the perceptions of these external sources are critical to the success of any organization.

Some researchers (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Ivy, 2001) argue that image is developed not only by external individuals, but in the minds of internal stakeholders such as faculty, staff, and current students. This further adds to the complexity of image as faculty beliefs about the quality of academic programs may be completely different from the beliefs of students (Belanger et al., 2002). Alessandri (2001) suggested that institutions have what is coined as a projected image. This image in essence formulates identity and creates reputation. Alessandri, Yang, and Kinsey (2006) discussed reputation

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along with visual identity (another term for image) and suggested that image and reputation are comprised to three cognitive associations: social reputation, academic reputation, and lack of distinction. Research suggests that messages should be specifically catered to target audiences (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Ngai, 2003).

According to Kotler and Fox (1985), responsive institutions seek to understand how its stakeholders view their institution as people most often focus on image more than reality. Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) propose that understanding image and reputation alike, enable institutional leaders to be more effective in developing marketing strategies, such as advertising. These strategies work to attract students and other institutional supporters. As Terkla et al. (1993) asserted, image controls several aspects of an institutions growth and development including the enrollment of students, hiring of faculty and staff, as well as garnering financial support from donors. Because of this, Terkla et al. (1993) asserted that institutional leaders should work to understand image in an effort to improve it and ensure that it reflects the institution's reality.

Similar to the institutional identity, institutional image is multifaceted. Each institution serves a variety of purposes and subsequently has a variety of images associated with their effectiveness in those areas. Terka et al. (1993) identify four dimensions that institutions should be mindful of including their academic, political, social, and stylistic roles.

Kazoleas, Kim, and Moffitt (2001) worked to examine the varying images as perceived by various stakeholders and found that images can be impacted by any number of factors by any one group of stakeholders. Their research suggested that image is both receiver-oriented as well as audience specific and can vary based on a number of external

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factors. The authors contended however, that image is central to the decision-making process of all stakeholders and work must be done to facilitate image development.

Sung and Yang (2008) argued that institutional image not only influences the desire to initially associate oneself with an organization, it also impacts belongingness, pride, and interest in a way that also influences retention. Brown & Mazzarol (2009) supported this idea with the assertion that those individuals who are currently associated with an institution, but are beginning to have negative feelings about institutional image, may elect to question their decision and ultimately "dropout" or disassociate.

<center>Institutional Reputation</center>

The opinions of stakeholders play a major role in strategic planning by admissions and marketing professionals. Much of a student's opinion can be based on institutional reputation which directly aligns with image and identity. Alessnadri (2000) expounds on this with the assertion that organizational identity has a profound impact on image which ultimately defines reputation after consistent image messages have been received.

Researchers have considered several internal and external factors in attempting to holistically define reputation. Some consider it a construct controlled entirely by external constituents (Carmeli, 2005; Stigler, 1962). Carmeli (2005) labeled it as the external perceptions of current performance and future behaviors. Brown, Dacin, Pratt, and Whetten (2006) proposed that reputation is composed of the mental associations external stakeholders have in regard to the organization. Stigler (1962) asserted that reputation is defined by the trust that stakeholders have in organizations regardless of limited information regarding true intent. Madhok (1995) noteed that this trust is essential considering the relationships that are created between organizations and their various

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publics. Bromley (2002) considered reputation to be the collective system of beliefs of a social group.

Some researcher assert that reputation can be controlled by organizational leaders and internal stakeholders (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2003; Rindova & Kotha, 2001; Schultz et al. 2006). Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) considered reputation an organization's ability to fulfill expectations. Schultz, et al. (2006) added that reputation involves a consideration of the competitive nature of product and service offerings. Rindova and Kotha (2001) suggested that it is the beliefs of individuals within the field, related to identity and prominence that work to develop institutional reputation. Similarly, institutional reputation has been identified as a perceived level of enduring prestige (Spain, 2005). Yang and Grunig (2008) proposed that reputation should be considered the enduring perspectives of an organizations multiple publics. These publics include media outlets as expressed by Deephouse (2000) with the assertion that reputation is the achieved media visibility and favorability. Sung and Yang (2008) combined these varying notions and conclude that organizational reputation is the enduring perceptions shared by an organization's multiple stakeholders. Alessandri et al. (2006) further established that for institutions of higher learning, these stakeholders include internal constituents such as students, faculty, and staff, external constituents (policy makers, donors, parents, alumni, etc.), and the media.

Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) suggested that there are five dimensions of organizational reputation: visibility, consistency, transparency, distinctiveness, and authenticity. Maringe and Gibbs (2009) identified four contributors to institutional

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reputation that a college or university can manage. They include market communication, risk/crisis management, public relations, and branding.

According to Gatfield et al. (1999) reputation is often considered more important in shaping decision making than the actual quality of products and services. This is based on the notion that reputation represents perceived excellence. For example, if an employer knows that a potential employee is a graduate of an Ivy League Institution, they are likely to act based on the assumption that the potential employee received a quality education even though that may not have been the case.

Reputation directly impacts an organization's ability to market products and services (Carmeli & Tishler, 2005). If the organization has a good reputation, it is automatically assumed that the products and services will be of equal quality. Balmer and Gray (1999) proposed that image and reputation align in that positive institutional images create strong reputations. Fombruna and Van Riel (2007) argued that organizations must have a strong sense of identity to effectively defend their reputation on a consistent basis.

According to Gardberg and Fombrun (2002) an organization's reputation has the power to influence the thoughts and behaviors of both internal and external stakeholders. This in essence impacts organizations on both an institutional and competitive level. Deephouse and Carter (2005) suggested that this influence is typically dictated by a combination of experiences and information and these experiences can be either direct or indirect (Alessandri, 2006). Additionally, information can be gathered from several varied sources including the media, the university itself, and word of mouth.

Reputation is vital for both public (Joseph et al. 2012; Kusumawati et al. 2010) and private institutions (Al Jamil et al. 2012; Baharun et al. 2011). In a study examining

the perspectives of 100 students from 10 private institutions, Al Jamil et al. (2012) found

that along with education quality, cost of study, and student politics, reputation was

ranked as one of the most important consideration for selecting a private school.

Similarly, Joseph et al. (2012) compared the selection process of students at both

public and private colleges and universities and found that reputation is a top

consideration for students at both institution types. In addition to reputation, public

school students rank selectivity, personal interaction, facilities and cost as their top

considerations. Reputation, academic and athletic programs, housing, and location were

found to be central to public school students.

There are several factors that play varying roles in reputation development.

Beyond the students' personal experiences, word of mouth, and media-driven

advertisements, students can also access institutional ranking information from a variety

of sources. This information is critical as Morley and Aynsley (2007) and Chevalier and

Conlon (2003) suggested that university categories and ranking impact graduate earned

wages once they entered the workforce. Chevalier and Conlon (2003) proposed that there

is a distinct link between institutional reputation and the ability of graduates to gain

employment with reputable organizations. Morley and Aynsley (2007) examined the

correlation between institution rank and graduate salary and suggested that those from

more prestigious institutions earn higher salaries. Due to the increasing relevance of

ranking systems and the desire of institutional leaders to have a positive institutional

identity, some image professionals have reported fabricating institutional data to appear

more desirable to outside stakeholders (Jaschick, 2012). Two institutions in particular,

Claremont McKenna College and Flagler College, were recently found to have reported

false information in an effort to boost their image (DeSantis, 2014; Slotnik & Perez-Pena, 2012).

In the last couple decades, several ranking systems have emerged. Academic Ranking of World Universities (2003), QS Worldwide University Ranking (2011), US News and World Report (2012), Times Higher Education World Ranking (2014), Leiden Ranking (2012), and Center for World University Rankings (2016), all provide institutional rankings that students can use for decision making. While most of these rankings present information regarding student diversity, academic programs, acceptance trends, class sizes, etc., their findings are often generated using varying methodologies. For example, Leiden Ranking boasts of using advanced indicators of scientific impact and providing multidimensional perspectives while many other ranking systems use institutionally provided information and aggregate varying dimensions into one sole indicator.

Prior to the onset of ranking systems, students often selected institutions based on category or classification. Caplow and McGee (1958) provided one of the first systems for institutional categorization in their book *The Academic Marketplace*. The authors looked at four Big Ten institutions, three Ivy League, two Southern, and one Californian to examine hiring and firing trends. As a result, institutions were labeled either "major league" or "bush league." Shortly thereafter, in the early 1970s, the Carnegie commission on Higher Education developed the Carnegie Classification System as a means of labeling various forms of institutions of higher learning (McCormick & Zhao, 2005). This system includes all accredited degree-granting colleges and universities that are affiliated with the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary

Education Data System. The system classifies institutions based on a number of factors including degree offerings, instructional programs, enrollment profiles, size, and residential characteristics. The initial classification system included: doctorate granting institutions, masters granting institutions, baccalaureate, and associate, special focus, and tribal colleges.

As has been established, identity, image, and reputation all play a role in college choice. For that reason, many institutional leaders have worked via branding, advertising, and other marketing efforts to control the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of students, parents, and other institutional stakeholders.

Much of the more recent marketing research that focuses on institutions of higher learning is geared toward their use of more modern innovations such as social media rather than college websites (Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Clark, Fine, & Scheuer, 2017; Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Gonzalez Canche, 2012; Gregory, 2014; Neier & Zayer, 2015). Hence, a large amount of the supporting literature selected for this study is older than typically suggested for a study of this nature. Nonetheless, the volume of research, both old and recent alike, report that websites continue to be a key factor in college choice and ultimately support the use of websites as a focal point of this study.

Institutional Branding

Students are no longer taking a passive role in selecting institutions of higher learning; they would now be comparable to "aggressive shoppers" who have a long list of demands (Rossi, 2014). Under the circumstances, administrators at these institutions have been forced into creating an identity that makes them stand out from the rest (Borin, 2014). Students often have to consider the diversity of institutional size, type, and

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mission. Many institutional leaders have worked to carve a niche that would appeal to particular targeted audiences. This niche is often promoted in various advertisements to formulate what is known as institutional branding. Understanding brand culture allows for a better understanding of the marketization of higher education.

Many authors contend that a strong brand increases organizational performance (Khanna, Jacob, & Yaday, 2014; Kylander & Stone, 2012; Liu, Chapleo, Ko, & Ngugi, 2013). Considering the contemporary identity of students as customers, marketing strategies are subsequently directed not only to reinforcing the institutional mission, they also include market-based components (Anctil, 2008). Strategic communications are typically based on a combination of institutional mission, vision, and value statement (Bosch, Venter, Han, & Boshoff, 2006). These market strategies often work to develop brand identities which work to affect stakeholder impressions of institutional image.

Researchers suggest two conflicting ideas regarding what institutional brand is. On one hand, an institution's brand has been presented as something influenced entirely by internal stakeholders (Balmenr, 2001; de Chernatony & Cottam, 2006; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Kapferer, 2004; Keller, 2001; Srivastava, 2010). On the other hand, some suggest that brand is constructed by an institution's public and is left to the interpretation of those publics (Aaker, 1997; Hankinson, 2004; Upshaw, 1995). In essence, branding is not necessarily a matter of what is created but more so what publics believe has been created (Upshaw, 1999). This idea is so powerful in the minds of organizational audiences that Fournier (1998) suggested that they formulate personal relationships with institutional brands. If they elect to align themselves with a particular institution, they may thereafter define themselves according to institutional brand (Aaker,

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1999). Williams (2012) proposeed that the overall brand of an institution is composed of three-tiers, brand identity or organization-based brand equity, brand soul (employee-based brand equity, and brand image (external stakeholder or target audience-based brand equity).

Contrary to popular notions, branding goes far beyond simply a logo, tagline, or slogan. Branding entails the strategic practices used for developing a mental and emotional picture that dictates the entire understanding customers have related to the products and services that organizations offer. According to Arpan, Raney, and Zivnuska (2003), branding is an enduring construct and is composed of all messages received by stakeholders over an extended period of time. Institutional brand can be observable via examination of vision statements, value statements, and a variety of visual emblems such as those included in advertisements and other institutional promotions (Waeraas and Solbakk, 2009).

The impact that a brand has spans far beyond initial impressions that convince customers to purchase a product. Similarly, institutional brand impacts far more than a student's decision to enroll at one particular institution over another. Institutional brand encompasses the thoughts and feelings that all stakeholders have when they see college advertisements, the feeling students get when they hear the school song, the pride graduates feel when they participate in commencement, and even how alumni feel when they receive calls or letters soliciting donations. According to Neumark (2012), although institutional image is impacted by numerous factors, one negative incident could alter an institution's brand permanently.

Gutman and Miaoulis (2003) referred to an institution's brand as a theme that the institution replicates across all message mediums. This theme allows for targeted audiences to receive a consistent message through varied mediums that are specialized for their needs and desires. The brand represents both the emotional and cognitive factors that enable targeted audiences to define what an institution is and represents. Gutman and Miaouls (2003) further asserted that an institutional brand can be one of the most powerful influences on college choice.

Brand identities work to illuminate distinguishing factors of institutions. The successful distinction of an institution from the plethora of similar institutions within established categories creates what Hanna (2003) refered to as the "institutional advantage" (p. 30). Newman et al. (2004) suggested that branding is directly connected to reputation as the internally developed brand works to manipulate external reputation and establish an image that is reflective of institutional mission and strategic marketing plans. Newman further adds that institutions typically use branding efforts that demonstrate the most positive attributes of an institution including their unique strengths.

A review of literature on higher education branding reveals a number of varying subjects including: internal branding (Mitchell, 2002), brand personality (Aaker, 1997), brand equity (Keller, 1993), brand identity (Wheeler, 2003), and brand values (de Chernatony, Drury, and Segal-Horn, 2004). While many of these terms are used interchangeably, they each have subtle differences. Internal branding refers to the communication of brand promises to those stakeholders within the institution. Brand image refers to the audiences' interpretation of messages and their developed perceptions. Brand equity is considered synonymous with institution reputation and is based on

collective perceptions. Brand identity is the organization-based images that internal constituencies develop and attempt to promote as a method of influence. Each of these can have a significant impact on advertising practices and subsequent outcomes.

For the most part, literature specifically on branding in the realm of higher education focuses on external factors including brand development, domestic brand communication, and international branding (Baker & Balmer, 1997; Belanger et al. 2002; Bulotaite, 2003; Chapleo, 2004; Gray et al. 2003; Hemsley-Brown & Goonawardana, 2007).

A brand can convey as many as six levels of meaning including: value, culture, benefits, attributes, personality, and user. When developing a brand, it is imperative that an institution not focus completely on organizational attributes as these may be identical to the attributes of other institutions and may lose value over time. Additionally, students are typically more interested in the benefits associated with selecting one institution over another.

Wallace, Wilson, & Miloc (2011) proposed that institutional brands incorporate items that are easily recognizable, meaningful, and enduring. These items may include promises associated with the benefits attached to an organization, organizational reality, as well as symbolic elements (Bennett & Savani, 2009). For institutions of higher learning, promises may be related to social access, intellectual development, and/or career placement. Organizational reality may include methods of instruction, class size, programs, location, access to technology, etc. Symbolic elements often include logos, mascots, and slogans.

According to Patterson (1999) brand impression is the result of all interaction stakeholders have with an institution including contact with current students, alumni, and employees as well as impressions of external messages received via external media outlets, advertisements and other marketing messages. Branding a purposeful process initiated by organizational leaders involves a process of defining the identity of an institution including what it is, and what it stands for. Additionally, all internal constituencies must be familiar with the brand so that they can act in alignment with its precepts (Ind, 2004).

According to Underwood, Bond, and Baer (2001), branding is critical for service-based organizations such as colleges and universities because what they offer is not tangible. Lowrie (2007) asserted that because institutions of higher learning offer an intangible product, branding can be far more complicated. He adds that the diversity of stakeholders along with diversity of course offerings, internal resistance to change, and sub-branding add to the difficulty of creating an institutional brand. In an effort to counter some of these pitfalls, researchers have recommended various strategies for effective brand creation and promotion. One suggestion is to ensure that all employees are familiar with the brand and work to promote a unified brand (Berry, 2000; Dholakia, 2014; Khanna et al, 2014)

Hamann, Williams and Omar (2007) proposed that institutional branding is central to effective advertising and student enrollment as institutional brand allows potential students a level of social status a sense of identity as upon graduation they become lifelong organization members. Balmer & Liao (2007) added that this status is significant not merely for students, but all other internal and external stakeholders.

Internet Use in Higher Education

According to McDonough (1994), the use of electronic media, including radio

and television, to promote institutions of higher learning started toward the end of the

1960s. Ironically, it was during this same period that the internet was

developed. According to Koomen (1997), the internet was developed by scientists for the

Advanced Research Projects Agency of the United States Department of Defense. While

not readily available for use by average individuals, academics had access and began use

of the internet by the 1970s. Moschovitis (1999) asserted that use of the internet quickly

spread after the emergence of the personal computer industry and became popular for

both constructive purposes such as those performed by academic entities as well as

destructive purposes such as hacking and identity theft. As the use of the internet became

more popular, scientists continued to create more internet-based functions. By 1994, the

internet was being used for global interactions via web conferencing. Currently, the

internet has become a tool that is accessible by people from all walks of life on

computers, tablets, and smartphones. Additionally, internet applications with a variety of

utilities make the internet a resource that touches the lives of individuals in practically

every area.

When institutions of higher learning initially started using the internet, access was

limited to faculty and staff who used it to communicate with faculty and staff at other

institutions (Reiser, 2007). Shortly thereafter, additional applications allowed for usage to

also include students who used it as a tool for distance education. Eventually the internet

became popular as an advertising medium shortly after it became a tool for public use.

Development of College Websites

The importance of the internet as a tool for recruiting students has been supported in several studies (Abrahamson, 2000; Clayton, 2003; Hartman, 1997; Kittle and Ciba, 2001; Mechitov et al., 2004). Clayton (2003) in particular found that students within his study listed the internet as their primary tool for information when attempting to select a college.

Abrahamson (2000) reported that websites were the second most important component when considering institutions, while campus visits were actually the most important contributor to building potential students' impressions about institutions. Meyers (2008) referred to college websites as the "virtual face" of the institution. While Hu and Soong (2006) reported that the original websites were designed in a similar fashion as print media such as brochures, functions have drastically advanced and often cater to those most technologically savvy. Greenwood (2012) explained that many modern college websites have links to videos, blogs, virtual tours, and social networking sites. Other than recruitment, college websites enable current faculty, staff, and students to accomplish several tasks. It allows them to communicate internally and externally (Carneva, 2005).

Pampaloni (2006) discussed a connection between the institutional image and identity and various marketing tools including online and print material. In her three-phased study, the researcher reported five distinct findings of her research: 1) as a construct, organizational image is purely unique, 2) when studying organizational communication, it is important to consider all external stakeholders, 3) there is an undeniable relationship that exists between institutional image and identity, 4) items that

contribute to institutional identity and institutional image are unique, and 5) a need exists

to develop a consistent definition for organizational image.

Pegoraro (2006) asserted that the internet has been considered somewhat of a

"great equalizer" as it allows institutions of higher learning to gain access to countless

perspective students without spending an exorbitant amount of university funds. This

notion suggests that even though many HBCUs do not have the marketing budgets that

some of their PWI counterparts have, they can maintain a competitive edge via online

platforms, particularly university websites. Hence, the disparity between these two

groups is lessened in regard to online marketing power.

Klassen and Sitzman (2002) proposed that while any institution can afford to have

a website, only those institutions that are willing and able to devote time and resources

into crafting their website into user-focused marketing will be able to experience

measurable marketing success. Pegoraro (2006) added that this may involve a

commitment to maintaining and operating the website once it is created.

Content-Rich Branding

With the advent and popularity of internet usage comes a wealth of opportunities

and many subsequent changes in a multitude of arenas including higher education,

communication, and marketing. Digital content marketing is an example of one of these

changes. According to the Content Marketing Institute (n.d.), digital content marketing is

defined as "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing relevant

and valuable content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and, ultimately, to

drive profitable customer action." According to Holliman and Rowley (2014), digital

content marketing can be presented using web pages, social media, and value-added

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content. Pharr (2017) proposed that this form of marketing can be divided into two subgroups: open source branding and content-rich branding.

Open-source branding is a form of inbound marketing that is based on user-generated content. User-generated content is information about products, services, and/or the organizations that offer them. This information may be presented in the form of social media posts, comments and/or ratings on discussion forums or blogs, etc. Such information can come in the form of text, audio files, videos, or images. While open-source branding has been considered a natural choice for universities as external stakeholders such as alumni and other supporters often assist with recruitment initiatives, Pharr (2012) proposed that the problem with open-source branding is that the organization does not have control of the messages that are produced.

While much of the literature on institutional branding focuses on consumer-based branding, internal branding, and open-source branding, Pharr (2017) suggested that a fourth form of institutional branding be considered, content-rich branding. Content-rich branding, similar to open-source branding, includes information about the goods and/or services that an organization offers. However, the narrative is controlled by the organization. Examples may include the images, information, and tools that are made available on a college website or the photographs and/or information that is made available on an institution social media accounts.

What Students Expect

Anderson and Reid (1999) found that the most important features of a college website included access to admissions information including: email addresses for admissions officers, information about tuition and fees, a list of academic programs

(majors and minors), electronic inquiry card, campus directions, and class schedules. Additional requests included information related to athletics, scholarships, activities, college information, and off-campus housing.

Mechitov et al. (2004) included features such as online applications, admissions information, virtual tours, tuition information, departmental course information, and a search function in his examination of college website effectiveness. He noted that students desired fast loading sites that were easy to navigate with all relevant information and entertaining graphics. Additionally, students looked for information about jobs and internships, information about housing, information about university activities and organizations, and information about the area around the institution.

Vilnas-Yavatz and Tifferet (2009) conducted a study to determine what prospective students thought of various college websites and determined that images play a significant role in impacting perspectives. His study found that visitors associated images of buildings with impressions of the institutions such as the quality of services that would be offered, the attractiveness of the overall campus, and the degree to which an experience at the institution might be "pleasant." However, in a study conducted by Peifer (2012), photos of interacting students were also found to be appealing.

Williams (2000) stated that the best websites are personalized. For example, some websites offer students the ability to enter their names, e-mail addresses, and potential majors and thereafter receive personalized correspondence with general institutional and information about the application process.

Kittle and Ciba (1999) created a framework for examining college websites that had three levels: general information, course and registration information, and financial

aid information. They later conducted a follow-up study with specific content areas that included faculty, application, and tours. It was determined via the second study that many institutions were beginning to allocate resources into developing user-friendly websites that catered to the needs of students and were relatively consistent across the board.

Content Analysis

According to Prasad (2000), content analysis is often discussed in regard to communication research and is described as the scientific study of the content of communication. Several researchers ascribe a wide range of characteristics to content analysis for the purpose of providing an all-inclusive definition. Berelson (1952) defined content analysis as a research technique that allows for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of what he calls the "manifest content" of communication. Holsti (1968) proposed that content analysis is a form of research that allows researchers to make inferences by identifying specific features of messages in communication. Nachmias and Nachmias (1976) asserted that content analysis is a method that allows inferences and conclusions to be drawn based on the content of messages. Kerlinger (1986) added that the systematic, objective, and quantitative manner of analyzing communication in quantitative content analysis is for the sake of measuring particular variables. Thus, one may conclude that content analysis is a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner of analyzing the content of messages by identifying specific features for the sake of drawing inferences and conclusions about particular variables.

Prasad (2000) suggested that content analysis is useful in studying "sensitive research topics" as it is an unobtrusive research technique. It is often used in examination of recorded human communication such as books, websites, social media posts, text

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messages, letters etc. Utility is also found in the fact that content analysis allows

researchers to work with large amounts of data without making large financial

investments (Krippendoriff, 2013). According to Woodrum (1984), content analysis is a

"safe" form of research considering that if data is missing or if there is an issue with

coding, it is possible to return to the original content to address the issue which is not

always possible with some other forms of research. Additionally, content analysis has

been considered useful when attempting to examine trends and patterns (Stemler, 2001).

One of the most noted benefits of content analysis stems from the idea that beyond the

qualitative aspects of content analysis that some may label impressionistic, content

analysis can be conducted in a way that is purely quantitative which allows for more

objective research. According to Riffe, Lacy, and Fico (2005), explicitly defined and

replicable coding rules are necessary when attempting to produce a systemic and

objective examination of content frequency and characteristics. If performed properly,

content analysis follows all three of the basic principles of scientific methodology; being

objective, systematic, and generalizable (Stacks, 2002).

Stempel (1989) proposed that content analysis requires researchers to 1) select

units to analyze, 2) develop categories, 3) sample appropriate content, and 4) check for

reliability of coding. Per Merker (2014), college websites are the first resource that 97%

of prospective students look to when attempting to select a college. Thus, the content and

images on said websites can have a powerful impact on the impressions formed by

prospective students and subsequently impact their ultimate decision.

As discussed by Bell (2002), visual content analysis is often used in various forms

of mass media research to examine messages within the communication process. Many

additional researchers have supported this claim with their use of content analysis in examining advertisements (Bakir, 2012; Belch and Belch, 2013; Gardiner, Aasheim, Rutner, & Williams, 2017; Karande et al., 2006; Killie, Bungay, Oliffe, and Akchison, 2017; Kim et al., 2009; Vesna, 2012). In this study, the elements of analysis consist of both the content as well as the images that are made available on the website homepages of all active HBCUs in the selected states and all qualifying non-HBCU BSIs in those same states. According to Mogaiji (2014), the homepage of a college's website represents the public face of the institution. Additionally, Ha and James (1998) report that most people decide to stay on websites and look further based on their first impressions.

Content analysis is unique in that it can be used to change qualitative data into quantitative data. The primary difference between quantitative and qualitative content analysis is that while qualitative content analysis is descriptive in nature, quantitative content analysis is numerical. Muehlenhaus (2010) proposed that quantitative content analysis allows for the quantification, comparison, and longitudinal analysis of a series of data. This form of analysis enables researchers to provide precise, objective, and reliable observations about the presence and frequency of various forms of content (George, 2009). Han and Shavitt (1994) proposed that qualitative content analysis may not be as reliable as quantitative research considering its subjective nature. Thus, a quantitative version was deemed ideal for this study. An additional benefit of using such a method lies in the fact that data can be easily summarized and illustrated with the use of graphs and statistics.

Wang (1996) proposed that content analysis may be useful in the systematic analyses of advertisements. He suggests that this particular method would allow

inferences to be drawn in relation to culture and the media preferences of advertisement professionals. While there is comparative research on college website in general and those that compare American institutions of higher learning to foreign counterparts, there is currently no study that that looks at the websites of HBCUs in an effort to examine institutional marketability compared to any other institution type.

In summary, according to the literature, much has been discussed about the college selection process from varying perspectives. Literature has focused on the selection process of individuals from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as what factors play a role in why members of these groups select one institutional type over another. For African Americans, the decision of whether to attend an HBCU or a PWI can be very daunting. A major contributing factor in the selection of an HBCU is often some form of cultural consideration. Consequently, an institution's ability to market the cultural climate of its campus and the potential influence it may have on students' collegiate experience is critical. As noted in several studies focused on college choice in general, students from a variety of backgrounds tend to consider perceived quality and/or efficiency. Hence, the work done by marketing professionals to establish institutional identity, develop a brand, and manage institutional image is essential. Furthermore, the internet has become an invaluable tool in the efforts to accomplish these goals and a content analysis of websites has the capacity to produce valuable insight for academics and marketing professionals.

CHAPTER III - METHODOLOGY

This study sought to provide insight regarding any differences between the way that HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs use website marketing techniques for institutional branding. The researcher examined the presence of content, degree of access to content from website homepages, and racial representation in images, as these factors may contribute to the overall impression that prospective students, parents, and other stakeholders gain when attempting to navigate the institutional webpage. There currently exists support for a claim that there is a link between impression management and enrollment outcomes (Lamertz & Martens, 2011; Tyler et al., 2012). The ultimate goal of this study was to determine if there are differences in the internet marketing practices of HBCUs compared to their PWI counterparts that currently enroll a large percentage of African American students.

Research Design

The current study involved observation of currently existing conditions and is considered non-experimental. Much research has used experimental methods in examination of online marketing impact (Caravella, 2007; Machouche, Gharbi, & Elfidha, 2017; Shapiro, MacInnis, Heckler, & Perez, 1999). Therefore, there already exists a precedence for a non-experimental study such as this. This study involved a purposeful sampling process, which is common in studies that involve content analysis. The researcher and two trained raters rated data from 54 websites using a rating form developed by the researcher. The study used a quantitative approach to data analysis and sought to answer the following research questions:

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RQ1. Is there a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ2. Is there a difference in the degree of access that students have to recommended content on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs?

RQ3. Is there a difference in the image marketing practices used by education marketing professionals at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

Selected Population

The study sites selected for this study were chosen using a purposeful sampling methodology which is most often associated with qualitative research. According to Suri (2011), purposeful sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that involves selection based on characteristics of the population as well as the goal of the research. According to the Department of Education's White House HBCU Initiative, there is currently a total of 102 accredited HBCUs that actively enroll students. Twelve of these are two-year colleges. Most are located in the southern region of the United States (see Figure 1). As it would not have been feasible for the researcher to include all HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs in the study, it was deemed appropriate to include states with the highest number of sites that could be included based on number of HBCUs and BSIs. These states include: Georgia, North Carolina, and Alabama. While it is unknown how many non-HBCU BSIs exist across the nation, as this number can change each semester, these selected states were found to have the highest number of HBCUs as well as a relatively similar number of non-HBCU BSIs.
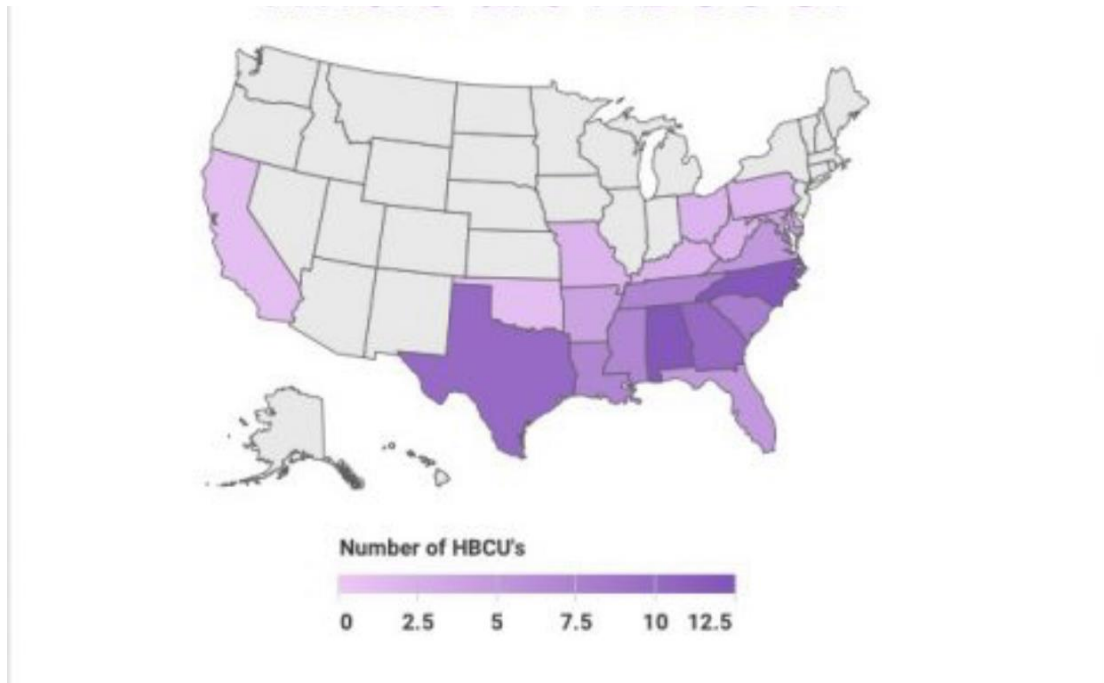
Figure 1 Color-coded HBCU Map (Benson, 2017)

Once the researcher determined which states would be included in the study,

additional criteria, including institutional degree offerings, accrediting bodies, and on-

campus living options, were considered prior to being included in the sample. All

institutions included in the study offer 4-year degree programs. Additionally, only

institutions accredited by a regional accrediting body, recognized by the U.S. Department

of Education, were eligible for inclusion in the study. On-campus living was also

included as a consideration as the lack of such an availability could prove

counterproductive in attracting some student populations.

The higher education system in Alabama is governed by the Alabama

Commission on Higher Education. There are thirty-seven public institutions of higher

learning in the state of Alabama. Fourteen of these offer four-year degree programs or

higher. One of the public four year institutions, Troy University, has two campuses--

Dothan and Montgomery. Several of the two-year colleges have multiple campuses.

Additionally, there are sixteen private non-profit institutions that offer 4-year degrees. Many of these institutions also offer Masters and Doctoral level degrees. While the Alabama Commission on Higher Education is the statutory coordinating agency for all public postsecondary education in the state of Alabama, each of these institutions maintains an individual identity with individual mission statements and separate administrative staffs. Fourteen colleges located in Alabama were included in this study based on the established criteria. Nine of these were HBCUs and five were non-HBCU BSIs (see Table 1).

There are thirty institutions of higher learning in the public university system in Georgia. Four of these are research universities, thirteen are state colleges, ten are state universities, and four are comprehensive universities. These public colleges and universities along with Georgia Archives and the Georgia Public Library Service make up what is known as the University System of Georgia. There are fifty-two colleges in total that offer four-year degree programs. Twenty of these are private colleges. Twenty-two colleges in Georgia were eligible for inclusion in this study—seven were HBCUs and fifteen were non-HBCU BSIs (see Table 1).

North Carolina is of great significance in regard to higher education in the United States. The University of North Carolina was the first public university in the country to enroll students. Additionally, Shaw University, located in Raleigh, North Carolina, was the first HBCU in the southern region. There are currently 125 colleges in North Carolina, seventy-five are public and forty-nine are private. Of the seventy-five public institutions, sixteen are public constituent institutions that fall under the University of North Carolina umbrella. Thirty-six of the forty-nine private colleges offer four-year

degrees and are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Eighteen colleges located in North Carolina were included in this study--ten were

HBCUs and eight were BSIs (see Table 1).

Table 1

Study Participants by State

State	Type	Funding	Institution
Alabama	HBCU	Public	Alabama A & M University
Alabama	HBCU	Public	Alabama State University
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Concordia College-Selma
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Miles College
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Oakwood University
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Selma University
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Stillman College
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Talladega College
Alabama	HBCU	Private	Tuskegee University
Alabama	BSI	Public	Auburn University at Montgomery

Alabama	BSI	Private	Faulkner University
Alabama	BSI	Public	Troy University
Alabama	BSI	Public	University of Alabama at Birmingham
Alabama	BSI	Public	University of West Alabama
Georgia	HBCU	Public	Albany State University
Georgia	HBCU	Public	Fort Valley State University
Georgia	HBCU	Public	Savannah State University
Georgia	HBCU	Private	Clark Atlanta University
Georgia	HBCU	Private	Morehouse College
Georgia	HBCU	Private	Paine College
Georgia	HBCU	Private	Spelman College
Georgia	BSI	Private	Agnes Scott College
Georgia	BSI	Private	Beulah Heights University
Georgia	BSI	Private	Brenau University
Georgia	BSI	Public	Clayton State University

Georgia	BSI	Public	Columbus State University
Georgia	BSI	Public	Georgia Southern University
Georgia	BSI	Public	Georgia Southwestern State University
Georgia	BSI	Public	Georgia State University
Georgia	BSI	Private	Life University
Georgia	BSI	Private	Mercer University
Georgia	BSI	Public	Middle Georgia University
Georgia	BSI	Private	Point University
Georgia	BSI	Public	University of West Georgia
Georgia	BSI	Public	Valdosta State University
Georgia	HBCU	Private	Wesleyan College
North Carolina	HBCU	Private	Bennett College
North Carolina	HBCU	Public	Elizabeth City State University
North Carolina	HBCU	Public	Fayetteville State University
North Carolina	HBCU	Private	Johnson C. Smith University

North Carolina	HBCU	Private	Livingstone College
North Carolina	HBCU	Public	North Carolina A&T State University
North Carolina	HBCU	Public	North Carolina Central University
North Carolina	HBCU	Private	Shaw University
North Carolina	HBCU	Private	Saint Augustine's University
North Carolina	BSI	Public	Winston-Salem State University
North Carolina	BSI	Private	Chowan University
North Carolina	BSI	Private	Greensboro College
North Carolina	BSI	Private	Johnson & Wales University at Charlotte
North Carolina	BSI	Private	North Carolina Wesleyan
North Carolina	BSI	Private	University of Mount Olive
North Carolina	BSI	Public	University of North Carolina Greensboro
North Carolina	BSI	Public	University of North Carolina Pembroke
North Carolina	BSI	Private	William Peace University

The institutions found to meet all criteria were thereafter separated into two groups: one group included all HBCUs from each state and one group included all non-HBCU BSI's. It is important to note that as part of a purposeful sample, the sites included in this study, are considered non-representative. This is to say that while the findings of this study may prove beneficial in providing insight regarding differences in the website marketing practices of the institutions involved in the study, these findings may not be transferable to institutions that were not included in the study. Nonetheless, the insight provided may be used by similar institutions in future marketing strategizing and implementations.

Instrumentation

A rater form was developed based on previous literature that focused on analysis of website content and images. The foundation of the rater form was based on a score sheet used by Harper (2001) to analyze the quality of admissions and recruitment material at HBCUs. Gibbs (2015) created a modified version that focused solely on recruitment material accessible via HBCU websites and social media. A similar analysis was conducted by McCoy (2011). McCoy's score sheet was used to compare the webpage content and search engine optimization of 56 institutions of higher learning separated into two Carnegie classification groups. As this study does not assess search engine optimization, this portion of McCoy's score sheet was not considered. In an effort to account for cultural climate, which has been noted as a major consideration by African American students, a section of the developed rater form focused on visual representations of racial diversity.

While the instruments developed by Harper (2001), McCoy (2011) and Gibbs (2015) provided a starting point, in an effort to include as many relevant components as possible, a thorough examination of literature involving college website content and prospective student expectations was conducted. Findings indicated that several content items were consistent across studies and include: admissions contact information, online visit requests, mail information requests, online applications, information about cost, scholarship information, information about campus life, information about housing, and information about programs and courses (Anderson & Reid, 1999; Gibbs, 2015; Harper, 2001; Mechitov et al., 2004; McCoy, 2011; Parmar, 2004; Poock & Lefond, 2001; Tate, 2017). According to Noel-Levitz, E-Expectations, (2017) student-centered navigation, rankings, and testimonials are also important. Additionally, more recent innovations such as a cost calculator, virtual campus tours, and links to social media accounts are expected on college websites (Voelley, 2017). As such, the following items were included in the content section of the instrument:

- History/About Section
- Admissions deadlines
- Admissions contact information
- Online application
- Online visit request
- Mail information request
- Housing information

- Financial Aid information (cost)
- Scholarship information
- Information about campus life
- Student centered navigation
- Rankings
- Testimonials/Mention of alumni
- Virtual campus tour

- Information about programs and courses

- Information about social media accounts

These items fall into three categories: general content, prospect specific content, and financial content.

Similar to the studies of Harper (2001) and Gibbs (2015), the first research question sought to determine if there is a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs. This was determined based on the presence or absence of each content item. If an item was present, the institution would receive 10 points toward their overall score. If an item was not present, the institution would receive zero points toward their overall score. As there was a total of 18 content items, scores could range from 0-180.

Unlike the original scoresheet used by Harper (2001), the instrument used for this study included a horizontal numeric scale for each content item and race category. The content portion of the instrument included a 5-point numeric scale. Items that were immediately visible and did not require navigation from the homepage received the highest rating labeled "located on homepage." Items that could be accessed via a single click to a hyperlink were rated on the next level labeled "link on homepage." If a hyperlink was not immediately visible but could be accessed via a dropdown menu or hover, the item received the mid-level rating labeled "drop down required for homepage visibility." If a related hyperlink was available on the homepage that took visitors to a secondary webpage whereby they could access the content item, the next rating was assigned labeled "related link available." The lowest rating, "not homepage accessible"

was appointed if visitors to the homepage could not access the content item. Descriptions for each of the content items were included on a content definition sheet that was made available to all raters (See Appendix C). Additionally, an explanation of each rating was included in the rating rubric (See Appendix D).

To address the third research question, the researcher included a section on the instrument that focused on the presence of images that represented racial diversity. According to Fischman (2001) the images found on websites and other marketing materials of colleges and universities indicate what is valued and made meaningful in a particular context. These images may have a significant impact on the perception of social, economic, and cultural conditions of a campus. Chakraborty (2009) adds that images are often considered the visual language of a culture. Examining the presence of these images in various forms of media provides a means of monitoring cultural climate.

According to Sheets (2005) ethnicity is quite complex and is part of a peoples' personal and cultural history. While ethnicity is complex and cannot easily be defined based solely on visual observation, many scholars have conducted research that required the identification and labeling of racial or ethnic affiliation based solely on appearance (Chu, 2017; Fischman, 2001; Hakkola, 2015; Ilett, 2009; Mogaji, 2014; Mortimer, 2000; Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013). Furthermore, many marketing professionals at colleges have focused on a visible definition of ethnic diversity which Pippert et al. (2013) suggest creates a form of symbolic diversity for prospective students. This research therefore defines racial diversity in a way similar to that of a prospective student. The raters examined images in an effort to reasonably assume whether the

website includes images of individuals who can be reasonable classified as one of the following:

- White/Caucasian

- Black/African American

- Hispanic/Latin American

- Middle Eastern

- Asian

- Other (May include Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, bi-racial individuals, or those who were obviously a part of a minority group (non-white) but could not be reasonably identified)

Rather than simply focusing on the frequency of images illustrating the presence of individuals who represented diverse racial groups, raters were trained to consider various aspects of the image regarding size and location as this could potentially speak to cultural climate. After a holistic examination of all images on the website homepage, raters were instructed to assign a rating for racial representation of each racial group using one of the following ratings:

- Substantially Represented
- Moderately Represented
- Minimally Represented
- Not Represented

Procedure

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According to Riff, Lacy, and Fico (2014) content analysis should involve a number of stages including the selection of samples, development of category rules, training of coders to use said rules, and analysis of data. Their recommended method was used in this study.

The selection of websites was selected using purposeful sampling while considering a number of criteria. A pilot test was conducted and included three individuals, the researcher and the two trained raters. The pilot test involved the use of a developed instrument to rate the websites of two institutions that were not included in the study. A website was chosen to represent both sample groups, an HBCU and non-HBCU BSI. Prior to the pilot test, raters were trained on how to use the instrument. A list of definitions for each content area was provided to each rater and discussed in detail. Additionally, depictions of examples of each item was provided to each rater. Once the raters completed their examination of the pilot websites, the rater form was examined and tested for inter-rater reliability using a kappa statistic to ensure that there was at least 80 percent agreement in scoring. In the case that eighty percent agreement was not met, discussions were scheduled to take place to determine how the instrument might best be improved. This was because definitions may have needed to be re-examined and clarified. Had the agreement among raters been less than 80%, a secondary pre-test with new sample websites would have been conducted.

Once an appropriate level of agreement was established, the raters used the instrument to examine and rate the websites of all institutions located in Georgia. This data was collected and a Fleiss Kappa was run to ensure that raters remained consistent in their level of agreement. As there was a decline in agreement, a follow-up training was

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administered. Raters were then instructed to rate the remaining websites. A final Fleiss

Kappa was run on all collected data. The data were thereafter analyzed using SPSS

statistical software.

<center>Raters</center>

Potential raters were contacted by the researcher via email. Both participating

raters earned advanced degrees and have extensive experience with research and data

collection. Raters ranged in age from 31-34 and had no physical or visual impairments

that would hinder their ability to use a computer or evaluate websites. One of the raters

was female and the other was male. Both raters self-identified as Black. This strengthen

overall reliability considering the target audience of the institutions included in this study.

For the sake of confidentiality, the female rater was assigned the pseudonym rater one.

The male rater was referred to as rater two.

Rater one possesses a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration. Rater one also

has a degree in Mass Communications with years of experience working with digitized

media. Rater one has earned degrees from both a private HBCU and a public BSI.

Rater two was a Ph.D. candidate studying Clinical Psychology. Rater two also has

professional experience in the field of Higher Education and while rater two has not

attended a BSI, he does have degrees from both an HBCU (public) and a TWI (public).

Prior to the pre-test, the raters had not been involved, in any capacity, with the

development of the instrument, rating rubric, or content descriptions. Raters were

selected based on their academic experience and familiarity with research methods. After

agreeing to serve as raters, raters were asked to confer with the researcher regarding

availability for training and testing. Once a time-frame was agreed upon, raters were

advised regarding website evaluation. Training included discussion of the instrument, explanation of the content items, and discussion of racial identifiers, multiple reviews of the rating rubric, and mock website evaluations that involved the researcher showing raters examples of each rating condition. Raters were given the opportunity to ask questions for clarification throughout the training period.

<div align="center">Data Analysis</div>

Once content and image data were collected from the websites of both sample groups, information was coded and analyzed using statistical analysis software. Specifically, the first research question, which examined if there was a difference in the content marketing practices used by HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs, was tested using a one-way ANOVA. The second and third research question, that focused on differences in the degree of access that students have to recommended content and the difference in the image marketing practices on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs, were tested using a binary logistic regression.

Analysis of Variance

To answer the first research question defined for this study, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is most commonly used when data includes categorical independent variables and continuous dependent variables (Sheng, 2008). While ANOVAs are most commonly used when comparing three or more groups, the test may also be preferred over other statistical test like independent samples t-tests as ANOVAs are considered robust as long as the sample sizes are equal and/or greater than 30 (LaMorte, 2017). When testing the assumptions for a one-way ANOVA, there are

three assumptions that are necessary: normality in population distribution, independence of variables or observations, and equal variance among the population from which the sample was selected (Gravetter & Willnau, 2013).

Logistic Regression

To answer the second and third research questions, a logistic regression was run. Logistic regressions are a form of general linear model that is considered a maximum-likelihood method for estimating probability (Gann, 2017). A logistic regression is most appropriate when there are binary dependent variables such as the two groups examined in this study (HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs) and research seeks to determine if statistical significance exists among a set of independent variables and the dependent variable. The set of variables that are used to answer research question two for this study includes all content item ratings. The set of variable that are used to answer research question three includes ratings for image representation. Analysis results can be used to determine if one or more of the independent variables is likely to belong to a specific group—HBCU websites or non-HBCU BSI websites (Watkins & Portney, 2009). Additionally, this form of test predicts the odds of a particular group appointment based on the entire set of covariates. According to Tabachnick & Fidell (2013), while odds ratio values greater than 1 are indicative of a unit increase or greater likelihood of DV1 assignment, values below 1 suggest less likelihood.

Logistic regressions typically share the same assumptions as normal regression: linearity, independence of errors, and multi-collinearity (Fields, 2013), according to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), "predictors do not have to be normally distributed, linearly

related, or of equal variance within each group" (p. 437). This form of analysis is ideal for this study as it allows for a holistic examination of content and image items as they relate the two institution types. Essentially, this analysis will indicate whether a higher degree of visibility of individual items is more closely associated with HBCUs over non-HBCU BSIs while considering all included items.

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference between the way that HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs use website marketing techniques for institutional branding. Three types of statistical analysis were run during this study. Prior to collecting data for the study, a pre-test was done to test the rating form and inter-rater reliability. A Fleiss Kappa was performed on data from the pre-test using Microsoft Excel 2013. Once inter-rater reliability was established and all data was collected, to answer the first research question regarding website content, a website score was calculated based on the number of content items available and these scores were compared between HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs using a one-way ANOVA. Website content ratings were used to assess the accessibility of recommended content using a binary logistic regression. Website image ratings were used to assess the degree of racial representation using a binary logistic regression.

Descriptive Data

The objects selected for analysis for this study were divided into two categories, HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs. Fifty-four websites were examined, 26 of which were HBCU websites (48.15%) and 28 of which were non-HBCU BSI websites (51.85%).

Table 2 represents the sample demographics by student population. Total enrollment numbers ranged from 314 to 32,464. Most of the study participants had a student population of between 1,000 and 5,000 students.

Table 2

Sample Demographics by Student Population

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	HBCUs		BSIs	
Number of Students	*N*	Percent	*N*	Percent
Fewer than 1,000	7	26.92	3	10.71
1,000-4,999	15	57.69	13	46.43
5,000-9,999	3	11.54	5	17.86
10,000 or more	1	3.85	7	25.00
Total	26	100	28	100

Table 3 represents the sample demographics by percentage of African American student. This was important as BSIs by definition have a student population that consist of at least 25% African American students with no greater percentage of any other minority group. Historically Black Colleges and Universities do not have such a population requirement. African Americans made up the greatest percentage of HBCUs in this study ranging from 64% to 97%. Non-HBCU BSIs had a much more diverse range of demographics with the lowest being 26% and the highest being 77.6% (see table 3).

Table 3

Sample Demographics by Percentage of African American Students

	HBCUs		BSIs	
% of African American Students	*N*	Percent	*N*	Percent
0-25%	0	0	0	0
26-50%	0	0	25	89.3
51-75%	5	19.2	2	7.1
76-100%	21	80.8	1	3.6
Total	26	100	28	100

Pre-test

Once there was a consensus regarding the preparedness of the raters, raters were given pre-test instruments and the URLs for two college website homepages that were not included in the study. Raters were also given copies of the rating rubric and content item definitions. All raters, including the researcher, evaluated the websites and completed the pre-test instruments for each on the same day within a two-hour time-period. Each rater used the same type of computer with identical screen resolution to avoid color discrepancies during image examination.

After each rater completed evaluating the pre-test website homepages, completed rating forms were collected and scanned to create a digital file. Data from the rating forms was thereafter coded and an Excel file was created. The Excel file was shared with

raters for a final review to ensure that there were no errors. Once the raters confirmed that their selections had been properly coded, a Fleiss Kappa was calculated in Microsoft Excel to check for inter-rater reliability. Two kappas had to be calculated as the test requires equal scale levels and the scales for content and image varied in length.

The kappa value for content items was found to be significant ($p = 0.78$) at $\alpha = .05$. This is reflective of substantial rater agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). The kappa value for image items was a bit higher than that of content items ($p = 0.82$) at $\alpha = 0.5$. This is reflective of excellent or "almost perfect (Landis & Koch, 1977 pg. 165).

Once it was determined that there was an appropriate level of inter-rater reliability, the raters were given access to the list of websites for all 54 institutions to collect data using the approved rating form. Each website was evaluated by all three raters. All data were collected during the month of August. Employees of the participating institutions were not informed that their websites were being examined as per Harper (2001) "institutions would put on their Sunday best" (pg. 62).

Paradata

To ensure that raters remained consistent in their level of agreement throughout data collection, paradata was collected. Paradata is defined as a by-product process data produced (Couper, 1998). This is typically discussed in regard to qualitative data collection and often associated with interviews (O'Reilly, 2009). However, according to Kreuter (2013), paradata can be used to test the design of research instruments and make alterations if necessary. Other researchers support this claim and report the paradata can be used during the use of survey data collection to optimize survey quality (Couper, 1998) and improve survey editing and coding (Lynn & Nicolaas, 2010).

Prior to the start of data collection, researchers were instructed to evaluate the websites of colleges located in Georgia first as this data would be used for paradata analysis. Once all websites for the colleges located in Georgia had been evaluated by each rater, the data was collected and coded for a Fleiss Kappa to check for inter-rater reliability. The test results indicated that there had been a mild decline in content agreement ($K = 0.71$). However, this value falls within the substantial level range and is indicative of relatively good agreement. Image agreement however, dropped significantly ($K = 0.54$)

In an effort to correct for this decline in agreement, the researcher administered a follow-up training session to clarify any confusion regarding rating criteria and strategy.

Once all data were collected, completed rating forms were collected and scanned to create a digital file. Data from the instruments was thereafter coded and an Excel file was created. A final Fleiss Kappa was conducted to determine overall inter-rater reliability and resulted in significant agreement for content ($K = 0.82$) and substantial agreement for image ($K = 0.66$).

To prepare data for analysis, cases with total consensus among raters were transferred to one Excel file. For cases where two raters agreed on a rating but one rater did not, the response of the two agreeing raters was used. For cases where there was not agreement between any of the raters, cases were presented for re-examination by all raters until a consensus could be determined regarding the most appropriate rating. According to Kvale (1996), this practice of using consensus among competent scholars has a rich history and has often been considered the final threshold that is collectively crossed on the way toward truth. Creswell (2013) mirrors this sentiment with the

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assertion that agreement among scholars is an acceptable reliability measure. As there were only 6 cases of non-agreement, this practice caused no noteworthy issue.

Findings

Research Question 1:

As with the studies of Harper (2001) and Gibbs (2015), the initial data analysis was run to determine if there is a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs. The website scores were used to conduct an ANOVA with institution type (HBCU/non-HBCU BSI) as the two groups. The assumptions of normality and independence of variable were met. As assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was satisfied with a non-significant result, $p = 0.81$. Similar to the results found in Gibbs (2015) research, the test determined that there was not a significant difference in the content that was available on the websites, $F (1, 52) = .344$, $p = 0.56$.

Research Question 2:

The goal of the second analysis was to determine if a difference exists in the degree of access that website visitors have to recommended content, tools, and information on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs. In an effort to gather as much potential insight regarding website content within a single model, a logistic regression was run using institution type as the dependent variable and content items as covariates

As previously mentioned, the rating form included 18 recommended content items. These items fell in three categories. The first of these categories was general content items

which included information that various different stakeholders might be interested in.

Table 4 outlines the frequencies for each item.

Table 4
General Content Cross-tabulation

		Ratings					
		Not Accessible	Related Link	Dropdown	Direct Link	Visible on Homepage	Total
About Section	HBCU	2 (100%)	1 (50.00%)	7 (63.64%)	13 (54.17%)	3 (20.00%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	1 (50.00%)	4 (36.36%)	11 (45.83%)	12 (80.00%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	10 (100%)	2 (100%)	11 (100%)	24 (100%)	15 (100%)	54 (100%)
History	HBCU	0 (0%)	10 (40.00%)	12 (57.14%)	2 (66.67%)	2 (66.67%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	2 (100%)	15 (60.00%)	9 (42.86%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (33.33%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	2 (100%)	25 (100%)	21 (100%)	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	54 (100%)
Campus Life	HBCU	2 (66.67%)	4 (100%)	11 (61.11%)	7 (26.92%)	2 (66.67%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	1 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	7 (38.89%)	19 (73.08%)	1 (33.33%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	3 (100%)	4 (100%)	18 (100%)	26 (100%)	3 (100%)	54 (100%)
Programs	HBCU	0 (0%)	3 (100%)	7 (70.00%)	12 (36.36%)	4 (50.00%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (30.00%)	21 (63.64%)	4 (50.00%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	0 (100%)	3 (100%)	10 (100%)	33 (100%)	8 (100%)	54 (100%)
Virtual Tour	HBCU	19 (57.58%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (20.00%)	5 (71.43%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	14 (42.42%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)	8 (80.00%)	2 (28.57%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	33 (100%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)	10 (100%)	7 (100%)	54 (100%)
Social Media	HBCU	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	23 (56.10%)	3 (23.08%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	18 (43.90%)	10 (76.92%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	41 (100%)	13 (100%)	54 (100%)
Rankings	HBCU	17 (53.13%)	2 (33.33%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	6 (40.00%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	15 (46.87%)	4 (66.67%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (60.00%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	32 (100%)	6 (100%)	1 (100%)	0 (100%)	15 (100%)	54 (100%)
Alumni	HBCU	14 (51.85%)	4 (40.00%)	1 (33.33%)	2 (50.00%)	5 (50.00%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	13 (48.15%)	6 (60.00%)	2 (66.67%)	2 (50.00%)	5 (50.00%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	27 (100%)	10 (100%)	3 (100%)	4 (100%)	10 (100%)	54 (100%)
Housing	HBCU	0 (0%)	6 (50.00%)	18 (51.43%)	2 (40.00%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	2 (100%)	6 (50.00%)	17 (48.57%)	3 (60.00%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	2 (100%)	12 (100%)	35 (100%)	5 (100%)	0 (100%)	54 (100%)

As this study was highly focused on the expectation of potential students, several

of the content items were admissions-specific. There were six items in particular that

were directly connected to admissions: admissions deadlines, the online application,

student-centered navigation, admission's contact information, mail requests, and visit

requests. Frequencies are reported in table 5.

Table 5
Prospect Specific Content Cross-tabulation

		Ratings					
		Not Accessible	Related Link	Dropdown	Direct Link	Visible on Homepage	Total
Student Navigation	HBCU	6 (60.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	19 (45.24%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	4 (40.00%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	23 (54.76%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	10 (100%)	0 (100%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	42 (100%)	54 (100%)
Admissions Deadlines	HBCU	14 (46.67%)	8 (42.11%)	3 (75.00%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	16 (53.33%)	11 (57.89%)	1 (25.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	30 (100%)	19 (100%)	4 (100%)	0 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Online Application	HBCU	3 (50.00%)	7 (36.84%)	3 (50.00%)	9 (52.94%)	4 (66.67%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	3 (50.00%)	12 (63.16%)	3 (50.00%)	8 (47.06%)	2 (33.33%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	6 (100%)	19 (100%)	6 (100%)	17 (100%)	6 (100%)	54 (100%)
Admissions Contact Information	HBCU	0 (0%)	2 (40.00%)	4 (80.00%)	20 (46.51%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	3 (60.00%)	1 (20.00%)	23 (53.49%)	1 (100%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	0 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	43 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Mail Request	HBCU	12 (50.00%)	4 (36.36%)	6 (85.71%)	3 (27.27%)	1 (100%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	12 (50.00%)	7 (63.64%)	1 (14.29%)	8 (72.73%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	24 (100%)	11 (100%)	7 (100%)	11 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Visit Request	HBCU	4 (100%)	6 (60.00%)	2 (100%)	14 (37.84%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	4 (40.00%)	0 (0%)	23 (62.16%)	1 (100%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	4 (100%)	10 (100%)	2 (100%)	37 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)

Information and tools for financial planning that were included in the study were

financial aid information, information about potential scholarship opportunities, and a

cost calculator. Table 6 includes a breakdown of reported ratings.

Table 6
Financial Content Cross-tabulation

		Ratings					
		Not Accessible	Related Link	Dropdown	Direct Link	Visible on Homepage	Total

Financial Aid	HBCU	0 (0%)	4 (40.00%)	14 (53.85%)	8 (47.06%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	6 (60.00%)	12 (46.15%)	9 (52.94%)	1 (100%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	0 (100%)	10 (100%)	26 (100%)	17 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Scholarship	HBCU	0 (0%)	16 50.00%)	6 (40.00%)	4 (80.00%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	1 (100%)	16 (50.00%)	9 (60.00%)	1 (20.00%)	1 (100%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	1 (100%)	32 (100%)	15 (100%)	5 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Calculator	HBCU	5 (26.32%)	15 (65.22%)	6 (50.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	14 (73.68%)	8 (34.78%)	6 (50.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	19 (100%)	23 (100%)	12 (100%)	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	54 (100%)

The assumption of multi-collinearity was assessed using the VIF statistic. All VIF values for content items were less than 1.85, indicating that this assumption was met. Thereafter, a logistic regression was run that included all 18 content items as independent variables and institution type as the dependent variable. The predictor variable omnibus test of coefficients produced a significant result, (chi-square = 41.88, p = 0.01 with df = 8) which indicated that there was a significant difference between the content ratings of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs. Additionally, the Hosmer-Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test score indicated that the model fit the data well, (chi-square = 1.73, p = 0.98 with df = 8).

Table 7 illustrates the null model, which indicates that if each website had an equal chance of being accurately classified as one of the institutions types (HBCU on non-HBCU BSI). This model accurately predicts 51.9% of website classifications.

Table 7

Content Block 0 Classification Table

		Predicted		
		Type		Percentage
Observed		HBCU	BSI	Correct

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Type	HBCU	0	26	0.0
	BSI	0	28	100.0
Overall Percentage				51.9

By including the predictors, the probability of accurately predicting classification was increased by 31.4% to 83.3%. Eighty percent of HBCUs were accurately classified and 85.7% of non-HBCU BSIs were accurately classified. The overall percentage of correct classifications was 83.3% (see table 8).

Table 8

Content Block 1 Classification Table

		Predicted		
		Type		Percentage
Observed		HBCU	BSI	Correct
Type	HBCU	21	5	80.8
	BSI	4	24	85.7
Overall Percentage				83.3

Due to the small sample size, the alpha level was set at 0.10. Table 9 shows that with the alpha level set at .10, five of the independent variables were found to have a significant impact on the model: about sections ($p = 0.02$), admissions deadlines ($p = 0.10$), visit request information ($p = 0.01$), mail requests ($p = 0.08$), and information about programs ($p = 0.09$).

Table 9

Content Variables in the Equation

	Sig.	Exp(B)
About	0.02	32.67
History	0.11	0.32
Deadline	0.10	0.26
Application	0.94	0.96
Contact	0.92	0.87
Visit	0.01	18.51
Mail	0.08	0.35
Housing	0.13	0.20
Programs	0.09	10.74
Financial	0.19	0.23
Scholarship	0.29	2.51
Calculator	0.11	0.21
Campus	0.11	3.27
Student	0.48	0.78
Rankings	0.25	1.50
Testimonial	0.91	1.04
Virtual	0.41	0.69
Social Media	0.85	0.75
Constant	0.09	.000

The odds ratio for visibility of the about section was 32.67 and indicated that the odds of having immediate access to an about section from the website homepage is approximately 32 times greater for BSIs than HBCUs. The odds ratio (Exp(B)) value for visit request information was 18.51, which supports the notion that visit request information is 18.51 times more likely on the websites of non-HBCU BSIs than HBCUs. Similarly, the odds ratio (Exp(B)) value of 10.74 for information about programs suggests that such information is 10.74 times more likely on non-HBCU BSI websites than HBCU websites.

Research Question 3:

As research suggests that African Americans often consider cultural climate at the campuses they consider attending, the final research question asked whether there was a difference in the depiction of race on the website. This was done using a 4-point numeric format. The ratings included: substantially represented, moderately represented, minimally represented, and not represented. A logistic regression was run using representations of the following racial groups on homepage images of the websites included in this study as covariates: White (Caucasians), Black, Hispanic, Asian, Middle Eastern, Other (this group may include Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and/or any individuals whose race could not be reasonable determined based on aesthetics alone).

Prior to running the analysis, the assumptions for the logistic model were tested and met. An examination of VIF values indicated that no multi-collinearity issues were detected. VIF values ranged from a low 1.04 to the highest score of 1.21. The logistic regression revealed that there was a significant difference between racial representation on HBCU websites compared to non-HBCU BSI websites as reflected in the omnibus test

of model coefficients, (chi-square = 14.58, p = 0.02 with df = 6). The Hosmer and

Lemeshow goodness-of-fit test resulted in a non-significant result, (chi-square = 10.98, p

= 0.20 with df = 8) which indicated that the model fit the data well.

Crosstabs revealed that 23 of 26 HBCUs did not have Hispanics represented at all.

Exactly half of the 28 BSIs (50%) had Hispanics minimally represented. Additionally,

two BSI websites had moderate Hispanic representation and 12 did not have

representation (see Table 10).

Table 10

Racial Representation Cross-tabulation

		Ratings				Total
		Not Represented	Minimally Represented	Moderately Represented	Substantially Represented	
White	HBCU	8 (80.00%)	7 (63.63%)	6 (28.57%)	5 (41.66%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	2 (20.00%)	4 (36.36%)	15 (71.42%)	7 (58.33%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	10 (100%)	11 (100%)	21 (100%)	12 (100%)	54 (100%)
Black	HBCU	0 (0%)	2 (28.57%)	5 (35.71%)	19 (59.37%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	0 (0%)	5 (71.43%)	9 (64.29%)	13 (40.63%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	0 (100%)	7 (100%)	14 (100%)	32 (100%)	54 (100%)
Hispanic	HBCU	23 (65.71%)	2 (12.5%)	1 (33.33%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	12 (34.29%)	14 (87.5%)	2 (66.66%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	35 (100%)	16 (100%)	3 (100%)	0 (100%)	54 (100%)
Asian	HBCU	15 (51.72%)	9 (42.85%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (100%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	14 (48.28%)	12 (57.15%)	2 (66.66%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	29 (100%)	21 (100%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)	54 (100%)
Middle Eastern	HBCU	22 (56.41%)	4 (30.77%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	17 (43.59%)	9 (69.23%)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	39 (100%)	13 (100%)	2 (100%)	0 (100%)	54 (100%)
Other	HBCU	19 (47.50%)	7 (50.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (48.15%)
	BSI	21 (42.50%)	7 (50.00%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28 (51.85%)
	Total	40 (100%)	14 (100%)	0 (100%)	0 (100%)	54 (100%)

Similar to the findings of the logistic regression run on content data, the null model indicated that the likelihood of accurately predicting group classification without including predictors allowed for 51.9% of websites to be accurately classified (see table 11).

Table 11

Image Block 0 Classification Table

		Predicted		
		Type		Percentage
Observed		HBCU	BSI	Correct
Type	HBCU	0	26	0.0
	BSI	0	28	100.0
Overall Percentage				51.9

Inclusion of predictors increased the probability of accurate prediction by 24%. The model properly classified 84.6 % of HBCU websites and 67.9% of non-HBCU BSI websites. Overall, the model accurately classified 75.9% of the sample (see Table 12).

Table 12

Image Block 1 Classification Table

		Predicted		
		Type		Percentage
Observed		HBCU	BSI	Correct
Type	HBCU	22	4	84.6

BSI	9	19	67.9
Overall Percentage			75.9

Even with the alpha level set at .10, Hispanic representation was the only significant indicator for non-HBCU BSI websites (see table 13). The odds ratio (*Exp*(B)) value was 4.64 which suggests that Hispanics are 4.64 times more likely to be at least minimally represented on the college website homepages of non-HBCU BSIs than they are HBCUs.

Table 13

Image Variables in the Equation

	Sig.	Exp(B)
White	0.53	1.29
Black	0.60	0.75
Hispanic	0.03	4.64
Asian	0.53	0.71
Middle Eastern	0.28	2.17
Other	0.59	0.64
Constant	0.94	0.89

Summary

Results indicated that there was no statistical difference in the overall website score based on absence or presence of content alone. However, analysis on the access ratings of individual content items revealed that there are differences between homepage

access to about sections, application deadlines, visitation requests, mail requests, and

information about programs. Further, differences were found in the homepage

representations of Hispanics.

CHAPTER V – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference between the way that HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs use website marketing techniques for institutional branding. This is of particular interest for HBCUs as many of these institutions are seeing declining enrollment numbers. According to Gasman (2007), this decline can be attributed to negative institutional image. As advertisement practices can be used to improve institutional image and college websites are a popular yet cost efficient vehicle for marketing, the way that HBCUs use this tool is of interest.

According to Gibbs (2015) it is critical that HBCUs gain insight regarding best practices that can be used in online marketing efforts to compete with PWIs. Additionally, Gibbs (2015) suggests that a study that compares the website content of HBCUs to that of TWIs could be helpful. As non-HBCU BSIs are, by definition, TWIs that have successfully achieved Black enrollment numbers of at least 25%, comparing their website marketing practices to that of HBCUs seemed like an appropriate option.

Ultimately, three research questions guided this study:

1. Is there a difference in the content marketing practices used at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

2. Is there a difference in the degree of access that students have to recommended content on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs?

3. Is there a difference in the image marketing practices used by education marketing professionals at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?

Content-based Homepage Score

The first research question that this study sought to answer was "is there a difference in the content marketing practices used by education marketing professionals at HBCUs compared to those at non-HBCU BSIs?" As with the study conducted by Gibbs (2015) each institution's website (*N*=54) was evaluated using an instrument that assessed the presence of website content items. However, this study looked at a total of 18 content items while the aforementioned study focused on 14 items. Content items to rate the about section, admissions deadlines, visit request, scholarship information, cost calculator, student centered navigation, and rankings were not included in Gibb's study. Additionally, her study looked at individual social media accounts while this study did not. Each website had the capacity to receive a score between 0-180. Similar to Gibb's study, there was no statistically significant difference between the content available on HBCU and non-HBCU BSI websites. The range of scores for HBCUs in this study was 120-180. The range of scores for the non-HBCU BSIs in this study was 100-180. While the general presence of content items was found to be non-significant, user-friendliness and the ability to access content quickly seemed to vary between websites—this observation was tested with a second research question.

Access to Content Items from Homepage

In an effort to determine if there was a difference in the degree of access that students have to recommended content on the website homepages of HBCUs compared to those of non-HBCU BSIs, an additional level of data collection was added to the original instrument. As discussed by Margolin, Miller, and Rosenbaum (2013), college students do not simply expect the content items previously discussed, they expect them to

be presented in the most user-friendly and efficient manner possible. This idea has been studied by several researchers (Bautista, 2010; Bell, 2009; Garrett, 2003; McCoy, 2011; Raisman, 2003) In an attempt to understand user optimization, Meyers (2008) examined the number of mouse clicks required to access essential content items and Poock and Bishop (2006) researched the time needed to access items. These considerations prompted the development of a scale for rating content access.

Raters were trained to use the scale following a method similar to that of Meyers (2008) and the coded data was used to run a logistic regression. The results indicated that there was not a significant difference in access to 13 of the 18 content items. The five items whose degree of access was significantly different included: the about section, admissions deadlines, visit requests, mail requests, and information about programs.

About Section

According to Caramela (2017) the about section of an organization is one of the most important sections of a business website because it essentially introduces your business to the world. The content of the about section has the capacity to determine whether an organization gains or losses potential support (Garcia, 2010). Additionally, the about section creates balance between content and web design (Kolowich, 2018). The about section of a college website typically provides information about the current status of an institution as a selling point. Information in the about section may include institution type, Carnegie Classification, aspects about the location, mission, motto, student demographics, faculty highlights, information about the staff, rankings, recent awards, and/or recent initiatives. As examined in this study, the about section seemed to vary across institution types. While most non-HBCUs had their about section directly on

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the homepage (n=12) or accessible within one click (n=11), many HBCUs required that visitors access a dropdown menu (n=7) and two did not provide access to an about section at all.

Admissions Deadlines

According to a university website guideline article by Sherwin (2016), it is common for students to complain about an inability to access admissions deadlines. Safier (2018) suggests that information detailing deadlines is essential information for incoming students. However, the findings of this study suggest that many colleges, consistent with the research of Sherwin (2016), do not have deadlines readily available. In fact, of the 54 institutions included in this study, only 12 HBCUs (46.15%) and 12 non-HBCU BSI's (42.85%) made admissions deadlines available from the homepage at all. This may be due to a number of factors. These numbers translate to deadlines being 0.26 times less likely to be available on the homepages of non-HBCU BSIs. Admissions personnel and website developers might not emphasize this particular information as many institutions use a rolling admission method which allows for a long window of time to apply. Nonetheless, this may warrant some level of consideration.

Campus Visit

According to Hesel (2004) campus visits are the single most important source of information for perspective students. Campus visits allow students and their families to experience the campus first-hand, gauge institutional fit (Greenough, 2003) and examine the overall quality of the campus (Yost & Tucker, 1995). Cohen (2009) suggests that campus visits have the potential to make or break a student's final decision. Additionally, Brown (2010) reports that students who actually plan and participate in a campus visit are

twice as likely to matriculate as those who do not. For this reason, access to information

pertaining to scheduling a visit is essential. For the most part, non-HBCU BSIs in this

study provide the greatest level of access to this information. Most have a direct link on

the homepage ($n = 23$). Only 4 require navigation via a related link and one grants access

to visit request directly from the homepage. The numbers for HBCU access are a bit more

disbursed—there were no HBCU websites included in the study that allow immediate

access, 14 provide a direct link, 2 require a dropdown, 6 require navigation via a related

link, and 4 do not have access to this information from the homepage at all. Thus,

immediate access to information about campus visits is 18.51 times more likely on non-

HBCU BSI websites.

Mail Requests

   In 2008, Hartley and Morphew reported that in spite of the increased popularity of

interactive virtual college tours, direct mail that includes additional information about an

institution continues to play an important role in forming the connection between

institutions and their perspective students. The current study along with other recent

publications provide a conflicting image of the continued importance of direct mail

request. According to Kamauf (2018), direct mail in the form of viewbooks is desired and

consistently made available by various institutions. However, LeLacheur (2014), reported

that students were no longer interested in viewbooks and other forms of non-personalized

communications that are often sent as direct mail. This study indicated that information

related to mail request is 0.35 times less likely to be accessed from the homepage on non-

HBCU BSIs. Crosstabs reveal that 12 institutions of each type failed to provide access to

mail requests from the homepage at all. However, half of the non-HBCU BSIs that did

provide access to mail requests provided a direct link that was immediately visible while most (71.42%) HBCUs that provided this feature required a hover or navigation to a secondary page. It was noted that some websites had the option to develop a personalized viewbook that could be printed from home—all of these were on the websites of non-HBCU BSIs.

Information about Majors and Programs

According to Safier (2018), prospective students do not actually look for colleges and universities; they look for majors and programs. A study by Poock (2006) found that the most frequently sought information of prospective students included program descriptions and required courses. Safier (2018) reported that if students could not readily access information about the program that they were interested in, they simply assumed that it was not offered and went on to the next college website. The results of the current study showed that information about majors and programs is 10.74 times more likely to be found on non-HBCU BSI websites than on HBCU websites. It stands to reason that many students may choose non-HBCU BSIs because they believe their program of interest is not offered at the HBCU that they considered.

<div align="center">Racial Images on Website Homepages</div>

Campus climate is defined as "the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual group needs, abilities, and potential" (Ranking, 2005, p. 17). Historically, this has been especially relevant for African Americans (Allen, 1992; Kidder, 2012; Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000; Wilbur, 2010). According to the literature on college choice, campus climate is a prime consideration for African Americans (Cartledge, Baldwin, Persall, and Woolley,

2015; Mayo-Mitchell, 2015). As suggested by Duggan and Smith (2016), marketing professionals who develop college websites often use pictures to illustrate a certain level of diversity which affects the viewers' ideas about cultural climate on campus. Hence, an examination of racial presence on website homepages seemed useful. To answer the question of whether there exists a significant difference in racial presence on the websites of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs, data were collected regarding the degree of representation for White individuals, four minority groups (Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Middle Eastern individuals), and a group label "other" which could have included Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and/or any other individuals whose race could not reasonably be distinguished via physical appearance alone.

Once data were collected and coded, a logistic regression was run to compare the representation of each racial group on the website homepages of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between representation of Blacks, Whites, Asians, Middle Eastern individuals, or those labeled as other; however, a statistically significant result for Hispanic representation was discovered.

Hispanic Representation

While most HBCUs (88.46%) did not have Hispanics represented at all, more than half (57.14%) of the non-HBCU BSIs had at least minimal representation. While HBCUs have a history of being welcoming to all students regardless of race, status, or cultural norms (Brown, Ricard, & Donahoo, 2004), the findings of this study suggest that their primary focus remains the education of African Americans. Beyond the lack of active recruitment for other racial groups, according to Dwyer (2006), diversity awareness in general is a subject that has been neglected at HBCUs. As might be

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expected based on the results of this study, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 4.6% of student enrollment at HBCUs is comprised of Hispanic individuals. This may be due to a number of things including the option of Hispanic serving institutions. Additionally, being categorized as a minority-serving institution does not guarantee that the campus culture will be sensitized or supportive of differences. Consequently, many Hispanic individuals may have cultural reservations about attending an HBCU.

Nonetheless, it could prove helpful for admissions personnel and marketing professional to examine their approach to Hispanic student recruitment. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Hispanics in the U.S. between 2000 and 2015 had the largest growth increase at 5.1%. A recent Pew Research Center analysis reported that Hispanics account for more of the overall population growth in the U.S. than any other racial group. This level of growth provides the opportunity for HBCUs to adjust their marketing tactics and potentially greatly increase their enrollment numbers.

<center>Rater Observations</center>

While this was not a qualitative study, observations made during rater training, scoring, and debriefing were inevitable. Discussions among raters after data collection led to the following rater agreements:

1. The primary selling-points of private institutions seemed to focus on community and small class sizes while larger public institutions often highlighted research initiatives and rankings.

2. Raters agreed that the overall quality of websites seemed to be best for large state-funded institutions.

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3. The most appealing aspects associated with the websites of small private institutions was the level of innovation and creativity involved in their website development.

4. Small private HBCUs seemed to be least favorable among raters in terms of quality and visual appeal. It was suggested that perhaps these institutions lacked the budget necessary to invest much into website development and/or upkeep and did not consider it a priority.

5. Women's colleges seemed to have the greatest amount of racial diversity present on website homepages.

Rating Form

The kappa values suggest that the rating form with accompanying content descriptions and rating rubric were effective tools for gathering the desired data. However, it was the consensus of the raters that the rating form could not stand alone without the rubric and descriptions or some form of training. Future adjustments to the rating form might include the addition of diversity statements as a content item.

Implications

The results of the study indicated that there is a difference in the level of access to various content items on the website homepages of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs in Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. While many HBCUs included in the study had well-developed websites with access to all content items from the homepage, many of the HBCUs seem to be falling short in regard to user-friendliness and quick access to content. Three items in particular were found to be lacking in regard to extent of access: about sections, visit requests, and information about majors and programs. Considering

the established relevance of these items, it is reasonable to conclude that these shortcomings may have some degree of impact on institutional image and subsequently impact enrollment. While many HBCUs are experiencing dire financial constraints, the swift developments in technological advancements and changing expectations of potential students may call for a re-examination of budget allocations to better align websites and other marketing strategies with best practices.

The findings associated with image indicated that the HBCU in this study had very limited depictions of Hispanic representation on their website homepages. This implies that HBCUs may place a greater emphasis on retaining the traditional image of serving African American students as opposed to embracing the need to diversify. Considering that our nation is becoming progressively more diverse, it may be counter-productive and socially limiting to not place a greater emphasis on diversity recruitment initiatives and have those initiatives reflected in marketing materials.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Quantitative research methods involve the practice of using numbers to represent an objective version of data. While this method has much support, it can leave many gaps. All possible content items were not examined in this study and evaluation was restricted to access from the website homepage. Additionally, while every precaution was taken to eliminate rater bias, the subjective nature of image evaluation, particularly in regard to race, leaves room for error. All HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs were not included in this study. Therefore, the ability to generalize the findings of this study may be reduced. Furthermore, as only website homepages were evaluated, conclusions about the websites as a whole cannot be made.

Future Research

The topic of institutional marketing at Black Serving Institutions lends itself to a wide range of potential studies. Future research could focus on a plethora of marketing approaches via varying media platforms from the perspectives of any and all potential stakeholders. This study focused on the use of institutional website homepages at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions in the states of Alabama, Georgia, and North Carolina. Several variable not included in this study have the capacity to impact college choice and/or institutional marketing strategies. During preliminary research, data collection, and data analysis, several additional questions arose on which follow-up studies could focus.

The literature suggests that African Americans in particular have special considerations when deciding which institution would be most ideal for their collegiate experience. One of these considerations is campus culture/climate. Having peers who students can identify with is beneficial; however, having people in leadership roles, such as faculty and staff that student can identify with may also shape impressions of campus culture and give students a different understanding of inclusiveness while providing opportunities for intercultural mentorship. Accordingly, an examination of minority faculty presence on marketing material might be worth examining.

The literature also mentions a push for greater inclusiveness at HBCUs. While HBCUs do not have a history of excluding students on the basis of race (Allen & Jewel, 2002), their missions and subsequent recruitment practices have been mostly geared toward targeting African American audiences (Brown and Davis, 2001). As our nation is becoming more and more diverse, it seems only natural that HBCUs should provide a

more culturally inclusive experience to prepare their students for what is undoubtedly going to be experienced in whatever professional undertaking they pursue. An examination of diversity initiatives at HBCUs may be of interest. Even more, insight garnered from a study focused on marketing efforts toward diversity recruitment and/or an examination of the possible correlation between level of racial diversity and enrollment outcomes could prove valuable.

While this study provides valuable insight regarding the depiction of racial diversity on the website homepages of HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs, there is much more to discuss about this topic. Research suggests that various aspects of images and the context of said images can be more telling than their presence alone. According to Butler (2015) images of individuals pictured with mixed racial groups convey a sense of racial harmony. Conversely, an image of a racial minority standing alone or with only members of their racial group might give the impression of a negative campus climate. For example, seeing one picture of a racial minority standing alone might suggest that ethnic diversity is limited and there are very few members of that group on campus. Additionally, a picture that highlights a group of individuals from one ethnic group might suggest that there is division on campus and that there is limited or no co-mingling among groups. Because this study did not examine the extent to which these multi-racial groups were presented on the institutional websites, a deeper investigation of this topic is advised.

During data collection, it was noted that a few of the college websites had content and features that most of the other websites did not. While all of the college websites had some mention of their social media accounts on their homepage, three of the websites

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were found to have images from at least one of their social media accounts embedded in their webpage. This allowed visitors to get a preview of exactly what the institution was showcasing via their social media accounts. This was most commonly done for Twitter and Instagram accounts so that website visitors could see the most recent tweets and or Instagram posts. As the popularity of social media makes it a valuable tool for strategic marketing (Felix, Rauschnabel, and Hinsch, 2017) and brand management (Asmussen, Harridge-March, Occhiocupo, & Rarquhar, 2013), future research could focus on this in particular and possibly examine the embedding practice and the degree to which it impacts social media account traffic.

An additional innovation that was practiced by only one institution in the study was the prospective student website. Individuals who visit Mercer University's college homepage will see a tab labeled "admissions." Once selected, this link gives you access to three options: Mercer Undergrad, Evening, Weekend and Online, and Graduate and Professional. When Mercer Undergrad is selected, visitors are directed to bethebear.com-- a completely different website created just for prospective undergrads. From there students can access everything outlined on the content list. Future research could include a look into this practice to determine if students and or marketing professionals find it more appealing.

Several of the non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions had diversity statements that were highlighted in some way on their website. Essentially, these statements articulated the diversity and inclusion mission of the institutions. Merkl (2012) proposes that very little research has been done on diversity statements; however, many institutions have adopted this practice. While a diversity statement was not included in the content portion

of the rating form for this study, it was determined that examining the presence and content of diversity statements on college websites might be appropriate for future studies.

Summary

The goal of this study was to determine if there was a difference between the way that marketing professionals at HBCUs and non-HBCU BSIs use internet marketing techniques in regard to content-rich branding on their website homepages. Special focus was given to content items and access to features commonly expected by prospective students as well as images depicting individuals representing various racial groups. Analysis run to answer research question 1 resulted in a non-significant finding. Examination of content ratings indicated that about sections, visit requests, admissions deadlines, information about programs, and mail requests are significantly different between institution types. The results of analysis run on image ratings indicated that Hispanic representation is significantly different between institution types.

While HBCUs are making great strides in many areas, some seem to be lacking in the area of impression management. As noted by Gasman (2007) institutional image may be an area that HBCUs should re-examine. Marketing strategies enable marketing professionals that represent institutions of higher learning to have some level of influence over their image and websites provide a popular yet cost-efficient way to do this. The result of this study indicated that some HBCUs could benefit from providing a greater degree of access to recommended content as well as promoting a better image of diversity on their website homepages.

APPENDIX A – Harper and Gibbs score sheets

Harper (2001) original score sheet

Institution name	
Cost	
Personalized Letter*	
Online Application	
View Book *	
History	
Famous Alumni	
Majors	
Financial Aid	
Housing	
Student Life	

Gibbs (2015) modified score sheet

Institution name	
Admission Information	
Online Application	
History	
Famous Alumni	
Majors	
Financial Aid/Cost	
Housing	
Student Life	
Online Request	
Virtual Tour	
Facebook	
Twitter	
LinkedIn	
YouTube	

APPENDIX B – Instrument

Rater: _____

Institution Name: _____

Location (State):   Alabama   Georgia   North Carolina

Institution Type: HBCU   Non-HBCU BSI

Funding Type: Public   Private

Content	NOT HOMEPAGE ACCESSIBLE	RELATED LINK AVAILABLE	DROPDOWN REQUIRED FOR HOMEPAGE VISIBILITY	LINK ON THE HOMEPAGE	LOCATED ON THE HOMEPAGE
About Section					
Institution History					
Admission Deadlines					
Admission Contact Information					
Online Application					
Online Visit Request					
Mail Information Request					
Housing Information					
Information about Programs and Courses					
Financial Aid Information					
Scholarship Information					
Cost Calculator					
Information about Campus Life					
Student Centered Navigation					
Rankings					
Testimonials/Mention of Alumni					
Virtual Campus Tour					
Social Media Accounts					
Images	NOT REPRESENTED		MINIMALLY REPRESENTED	MODERATELY REPRESENTED	SUBSTANTIALLY REPRESENTED
White					
Black/African American					
Hispanic/Latin American					

Asian				
South Asian/Middle Eastern				
Other				

APPENDIX C – Content Descriptions

Label	Description
About Section	The about section of a college website provides information about the current status of an institutions. This may include institution type, Carnegie Classification, location, mission, motto, student, faculty, and staff demographics, rankings, recent awards, and/or recent initiatives, etc. This is often where an institution highlights its selling points.
History	The history section of a college website provides information about the origin of an institution. This often includes the founding date as well as what individual(s) and or organizations played an integral role in creating the institution. Additional information such as changes in name, location, and/or function/focus may be included.
Deadlines	The deadlines section of a college website provides the dates on which admissions packages must be submitted by.
Application	The application section of a college website provides the means by which a prospective student may access or submit their application of admission. For this study, this may include access to an online application or a file that must be printed and submitted via email, fax, or postal mail services.
Contact Information	The contact information section of a college website provides the means by which admissions office personnel may be contacted. This may include an address to the admissions office, an email address or direct email submission portal, a phone number, and/or fax number.
Visit Request	The visit request section of a college website provides the means by which individuals might arrange a campus tour.
Mail Request	The mail request section of a college website provides the means by which individuals may request literature about the institution from the admissions office. This often includes application packets and/or brochures.
Housing	The housing section of a college website provides information about the housing options available at an institution. It may also include information regarding pricing, details regarding amenities, off-campus options, and/or the means by which student may apply for housing. This may also be labeled "Residence Life" or "Residential Life".
Programs	The programs and courses section of a college website provides information about the various majors and minors available at a college. This is often labeled "programs" or "academics." This section may also provide access to a course catalog or a breakdown of required courses for each major/minor.

Financial Aid	The financial aid section of a college website provides information about the cost of tuition and fees.
Scholarship	The scholarship section of a college website provides information about internal scholarship that are available. This section may also include information about external scholarships that current and prospective students may apply for.
Cost Calculator	Cost Calculator refers to a website feature that provides an estimated figure of how much it will cost to attend the college associated with the website. Cost calculators typically estimate a net price that includes tuition, required fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other related expenses.
Campus Life	The campus life section of a college website provides information about extracurricular activities that students may be a part of on the campus. This may include clubs and organizations, campus traditions, and/or other activities. Some colleges may also include information regarding off-campus activities and/or attractions that are in close proximity to the campus and are recommended for student involvement.
Student Navigation	Student Navigation refers to sections of the website directed specifically toward various potential student groups. (i.e. current student and prospective students/future students or undergraduate and graduate students, etc.)
Rankings	Rankings refers to information about how the college ranks compared to other institutions either nationally, regionally, statewide, locally, or within particular sectors such as within institutional type.
Alumni	The alumni section of a college website provides information about alumni and/or testimonials. This may include information about job placement, past or recent alumni successes, direct quotes from alumni, and/or mention of famous alumni.
Virtual Tour	The virtual tour section of a college website provides the means by which individuals may view the college campus via a simulation of the campus composed of videos and still images.
Social Media	Social media refers to access to institutional social media accounts. This may be present as direct hyperlinks to the available social media platforms, urls for the social media account webpages, or account names that can be used to search for campus accounts online or from the associated social media application.

APPENDIX D – Rater Rubric

Content Rating

Not Homepage Accessible – This response should be selected when access to content/information cannot be located on the homepage. **Note: This means that the rater is unable to access information regardless of clicks**

Related Link Available – This response should be selected when a hyperlink is available on the homepage that grants access to a secondary webpage whereby the content/information can be accessed. (Example: A hyperlink labeled "Financial Aid" might grant access to a secondary webpage whereby scholarship information and/or a cost calculator may be accessed.) **Note: One click takes rater to a secondary webpage which may require several additional clicks (this may include hover required links that do not take you directly to the source)**

Dropdown Required for Homepage Visibility – This response should be selected when there is an area on the homepage (typically located on the top or left side) that allows visibility of a hyperlink for access to the content/information only when the cursor is hovered over the area. Or when a tab is clicked revealing a dropdown list of hyperlinks. **Note: Hover reveals one click access to content/information from the homepage/Dropdown reveals one click access.**

Link on the Homepage – This response should be selected when a hyperlink that grants access to the content/information is immediately visible on the homepage. **Note: One click grants access to content or information from the homepage.**

Located on the Homepage – This response should be selected when the content/information is immediately visible on the homepage. **Note: No clicks are necessary to access content/information one on the website homepage.**

<u>Image Rating</u>

Not Represented – This response should be selected when the rater is unable to identify anyone from this racial group on any image located on the homepage of the website.

Minimally Represented – This response should be selected when the rater establishes that when compared to other images on the website, the racial group is minimally represented. For example, there is one person that represents this racial group while there are several images of persons from other racial groups.

Moderately Represented – This response should be selected when the rater establishes that compared to images of other racial groups on the homepage of the website, the racial group seems to be equally represented in terms of image size, location (being at the top of the webpage rather than the bottom), and frequency.

Substantially Represented - This response should be selected when the rater establishes that in comparison to other images of people, the racial group is highlighted in terms of image size, image location, and frequency.

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