Examining the Effectiveness of Marketing Practices of a Nonprofit Institution of Higher Education: Internal Service Provider

Doreen E. Sams
Georgia College & State University, Department of Marketing, Georgia, doreen.sams@gcsu.edu

Mary Kay Rickard
Georgia College & State University, mary.rickard@gcsu.edu

Kendra K. Evans
Georgia College & State University, kendra.evans@gcsu.edu

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Doreen Sams, Georgia College & State University, doreen.sams@gcsu.edu, Milledgeville, GA
*Mary Kay Rickard, Georgia College & State University, mary.rickard@gcsu.edu, Milledgeville, GA
Kendra K. Evans, Georgia College & State University, kendra.evans@gcsu.edu, Milledgeville, GA

*Contact Author

Abstract - Quality education is the sum of Institutions of Higher Education's (IHE) parts, including classroom instruction and internal services, that are key to a student's success during and after college. The purpose of this study is to address an understudied sector in the nonprofit marketing literature (i.e., Institutions of Higher Education internal service providers). The current study extends Dakouan et al. (2019) work by examining the marketing efforts of an IHE's career services center's effectiveness in creating awareness and increasing attendance at career events. The study focuses on outbound marketing strategies addressing the research question *"to what extent are outbound marketing strategies successful in creating awareness and increasing attendance at IHE's career fairs?"* Data were collected over three academic years through an intercept survey provided at career fairs and through a database of social media and digital marketing analytics at a medium-sized university located in the Southeastern United States. Frequency analyses were used to determine the effectiveness of marketing strategies in bringing awareness and increasing attendance to IHE career fairs. Further, attendance data were compared between results of frequency analyses of outbound marketing strategies. The findings revealed that only two effective forms of outbound communications used by the subject IHE's career center were personal selling by faculty and email blast. Findings also revealed that social and internet marketing strategies used by the subject IHE career center were not effective. The results have implications as to a need for continual marketing research of trends in marketing best practices. The findings demonstrated the need for adding inbound marketing strategies (Dakouan et al., 2019) and hiring and/or training staff in marketing research, social media and internet marketing skills. From the study's findings, it was concluded that Filip's (2012) study was supported. Thus, to create awareness and increase attendance at events provided by an IHE's internal services providers, strategically applied marketing best practices are necessary.

Keywords - Internal Marketing, Outbound Marketing, Inbound Marketing

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and/or Practitioners - The goal for IHE internal marketing of services is to generate leads with outbound marketing and use inbound marketing to

nurture leads; this is a perfect one-two punch to success. To create awareness and attendance at internal service offerings, today's IHE internal services personnel must employ a reasonably new marketing vocabulary, engage in brand communities, and engage in co-branding with the IHE.

Introduction

Quality education is the sum of Institutions of Higher Education's (IHE) parts, including classroom instruction and internal services, that are key to a student's success during and after college. IHE internal service providers offer valuable educational services that enhance the quality of a college education and increase retention and graduation rates Makela et al. (2014). Some students delay graduation due to difficulty in making career decisions which could be reduced with attendance at career services events (Doo & Park, 2019). Although career services are vital in preparing students to compete for employment in the global workforce of the 21st Century, surprisingly, as graduation rates increase, students who take advantage of IHE career services have not traditionally increased proportionately (Ghosh et al., 2012). To be effective, IHE career services must add value by offering quality products that, by their nature, require staff trained in identifying employment, internships, resume development, and interview preparation, Ghosh et al. (2012) but first, students must know services exist and what is offered.

Securing employment aligned with students' career goals makes attending a quality career service center essential for students and employers. The current study addresses an understudied sector in the nonprofit marketing literature by examining the effectiveness of internal marketing strategies in increasing awareness and participation in career fairs by students of the subject IHE's career services.

Literature Review

Although research exists on how students respond to marketing strategies when selecting IHEs, there is an absence of research on best practices for marketing internal service offerings to currently enrolled students (Heubner, 2021; Royo-Vela & Hünermund, 2016). When students commit to an IHE to enhance their college experience, personal growth, and future opportunities; internal IHE services' marketing efforts must be targeted and must continuously inform and engage students (Hesel, 2013). Thus, the quality of the message and method of delivery act as influencers to create interest in the organization's offerings to solicit a response (Huebner, 2021). As with IHE recruiting marketing efforts to attract students, IHE internal services marketing also indicates the level of quality its internal services to both prospective and current students (Huebner, 2021). IHEs have multiple internal services under the IHE's organizational umbrella that add value to students' college experience (Garcia Sanchis, 2012). Services are intangibles, heterogenetic, and inseparable from production and consumption, as well as perishable (Zeithaml et al., 1985). IHE services must satisfy all 7-Ps of services marketing (i.e., people, physical evidence, processes, product, promotion, price, and place) to be a quality and effective service provider. To create a lasting and sustainable competitive advantage, utilizing best marketing practices to reach the IHE service provider's target markets, requires adopting a marketing orientation (a.k.a., market/customer orientation (Lafuente-Ruiz de Sabando et al., 2018). A marketing orientation operationalizes the marketing concept. Research on IHE marketing orientation, taken from the students' perspective, has shown positive outcomes as to perceptions of service quality (Voon, 2008), customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth (Cassidy, 2014), and internal marketing success

(Carlos & Rodrigues, 2012). Thus, internal services should implement the services marketing fundamentals used by for-profit companies to successfully move students through the purchase funnel (Lovelock, 1983). Before a potential customer can move through a purchase funnel, they must first be aware the service exists. Filip (2012) proposes a solution using marketing strategies to bring awareness to IHE's internal services, subject to internal and external constraints, by controlling the services marketing mix (i.e., program, price, place, promotion, processes, physical facilities, and people) to create perceived value and generate a favorable response. The current study supports the concepts presented by Filip (2012) that best practices in marketing strategies applied by educational organizations improve effectiveness of service providers' marketing. However, IHE internal service providers have been known as marketing laggards (i.e., tend not to accept an idea or product until the majority has accepted them) in areas of market research and marketing principles. According to the Filip (2012) study, IHE internal services approach marketing principles cautiously at the operational level for income generation and student recruitment with limited success. Typically, IHE services' staff are specialists in their field not in marketing. Previous research identified a significant challenge in staff members' ability to create awareness. Many IHE services staff have been reluctant to engage in marketing opportunities which may come from a lack of understanding of the marketing discipline (Maringe & Mourad, 2012; Winter & O'Donhue, 2012; Alnawas, 2015). This perception may be due to a lack of dedicated marketing staff in many IHE service offices. Having a dedicated staff trained in best marketing practices can significantly impact the ability to effectively inform students of service offerings and move them through the purchase funnel (Meuter et al*.,* 2000).

Perceptions of IHE's career services' value was tarnished when career services were transactional. Although slow to change, IHE career services' role has evolved from vocational guidance and job placement. A study conducted by Makela et al. (2014) across 31 institutions in the US surveyed career services users and non-career services users to determine perceptions of career services' value. Most respondents found IHE career services as valuable and needed, revealing the need to focus on marketing the value added by career services. Today, quality IHE career services offerings are linked to recruitment, retention through relationship marketing strategies, and a source of revenue for an institution (sponsorships and event fees). Today's college students must develop essential job skills (i.e., critical thinking, leadership, communication, problem-solving, etc.) critical in a world of constant change where learning never stops (Gray, 2016). Thus, in order to provide quality service, today's IHE career services must focus on a great deal more than job opportunities (Monteiro et al*.,* 2016) they provide cognitive information that serves rational (planned) and intuitive (unplanned) experiential activities that aid in making career decisions based on experience (i.e., internships) and information (e.g., speaking with recruiters). Quality IHE career services follow a centralized career education model that includes extensive staff, better technology, networking with academic advising, utilizing alumni connections, and creating more visibility for their services. Quality career services offices develop relationships with stakeholders, transforming their offices into hubs of connectivity with advice, strategy, and feedback for different stakeholder groups (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014). Securing awareness of a service means little if the service provided does not deliver a quality product that ends with satisfied customers (Takeuchi & Quelch, 1983). IHE career services are value-adding services that address the demand for securing a better economic life, but if career services are not visible so students are able to take advantage, the lack of visibility results in a loss of economic opportunities for students.

Promoting value-added quality career services means cutting through the advertising clutter to reach customers when and where they reside with targeted messages. For many years, outbound marketing has been the norm (i.e., push products, one-size-fits-all, assumes those who need it will buy) but has limits to its effectiveness. Outbound marketing is what most marketers identify as traditional marketing and advertising that includes media like *commercials on television, radio ads, print advertisements, tradeshows, outbound sales calls (a.k.a. cold calls), or email spam* (Hubspot, 2019). Outbound marketing also uses online mediums, including social networking sites, which are web-based applications to facilitate social interaction (Ghosh et al., 2012). Yet, inbound marketing may be one solution to bringing in more customers. However, many career service centers have not effectively used or not used at all inbound marketing strategies (e.g., blogs, ebooks, info graphs, opt-in email and social media groups, podcast, videos, virtual communities, and whitepapers), content marketing (i.e., developing branded engagement opportunities for customer participation within social media networks, and publishing branded content), (Ashley & Tuten, 2012; Pelissier, 2012) and opt-in email marketing. Using an inbound marketing strategy focuses on pulling consumers in during their purchasing journey, however, someone searching for information, not specifically looking for a specific IHE's service offering, may not find it because of the lack of search engine optimization (SEO). If SEO is not part of its marketing strategy (e.g., place advertising based on keywords customers typed into search engines), then inbound marketing is less effective. In paid search marketing, a conversation is initiated by a potential customer searching a topic. The organization can insert itself into the conversation by creating ads and digital content that appear when someone searches for information relevant to the company (Wordstream, 2019). This requires strategically providing relevant, quality, personalized content aligned with consumers' interests. The marketer must earn potential consumers' business. It is up to the IHE to make visible the service offerings so the customer forms positive opinions of the service provider, considers the provider, and develops a preference for the provider resulting in its use. Therefore, this study focuses on communication strategies (inbound/outbound) for the subject IHE career service's career fairs. Although, Filip (2012) also notes that the type and quality of the message and how the message is delivered can bring most customers to a level of awareness. Nevertheless, examining the type or quality of the marketing message is beyond the scope of the current study.

Therefore, an important aspect of a quality career service is the creation of awareness of the opportunities that will help prepare students to be competitive in the global job market. Students who do not use career services miss out on important career opportunities. This means that career services must use the best marketing practices to increase students' attendance at events (Schlesinger & Daley (2014). In the active exploration stage of the job search, according to the chaos theory of careers, career services must offer active engagement through product offerings (e.g., career fairs). To increase attendance at career fairs, staff must know how to identify target markets and effectively develop marketing strategies (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2016). Unfortunately, typically, career service personnel are not trained marketers; thus, training and ongoing market research are essential to inform marketing strategies, create ongoing relationships, and create positive buzz. According to Royo-Vela & Hünermund (2016) making the essential connections with students that bring them to career service events involves understanding the customer, target marketing, and use and implementing the most effective marketing strategies to reach multiple target markets (e.g., across disciplines and demographics).

As with Makela et al. (2014), the subject IHE career service office for this study offer valuable services to ensure students have a competitive edge in the job market. Whether students

know what career to pursue or have not even started thinking about careers, the subject of this study's career services provide support and resources needed to compete in a chosen field. Appointments range from one-on-one assistance in selecting a major to tailoring resumes and cover letters geared towards a specific job description. The subject career services offer individual counseling, career fairs, networking events, and graduate school preparation. Appointments exist to guide students on creating a LinkedIn page and interpreting the results of career assessments. Thus, the subject career service provider meets the level expected of a quality 21st century career services center (Gray & Koncz, 2020). However, outbound marketing has not led to the level of attendance expected for the subject IHE's career fairs. Although it is essential to use different strategies to target different markets, the question is, *"to what extent are outbound marketing strategies successful in creating awareness and increasing attendance at IHE's career fairs?"*

Methodology

Dakouan, Benabedelouahed, and Anabir (2019) addressed differences between outbound and inbound marketing strategies as to effectiveness, they proposed that inbound and outbound marketing strategies complement each other. The current study examines this premise by Dakouan, Benabedelouahed, and Anabir (2019) by examining outbound marketing strategies of the subject IHE's career services career fairs as to their effectiveness without the use of inbound marketing strategies to directly address the findings of Dakouan, Benabedelouahed, and Anabir (2019). The IHE's outbound marketing strategies' effectiveness in creating awareness and increasing participation in career fairs were examined through frequency analyses for which findings are compared across outbound strategies. See Figure 1 below for the study's conceptual model that guided data collection and analyses.

Figure 1 – Conceptual Model

| Outbound Marketing Strategies | → | Create Awareness of Career Fairs | → | Increase Attendance at Career Fairs |
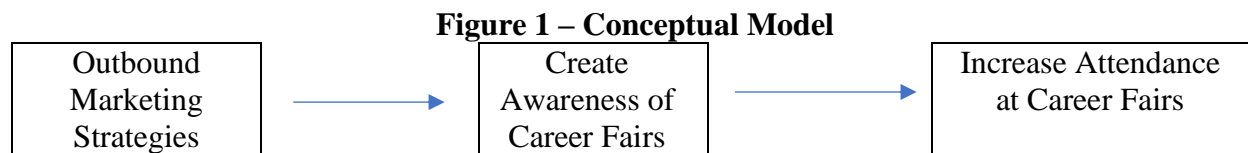
USA IHE Population

Approximately 19.6 million college students attended IHEs in the United States in 2018. The majority of the students in 2017 were under the age of 34, and most were under 25. A significant portion of college students enrolled in IHEs today were born between the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, known as Generation-Z (a.k.a., Gen-Z) (National Center for Education Services, 2019). To reach a substantial portion of enrolled students, the majority of students being Gen-Z, the dominant marketing strategy should involve adapting techniques to meet Gen-Z's communications needs. Gen-Z needs more realistic job previews than past generations (Schroth, 2019). Therefore, getting Gen-Z students engaged with career services is essential to developing interviewing skills, preparing them for onboarding, identifying job expectations, connecting them to the best career fit, and developing other career-related skills. Yet, marketing of career services must not only focus on Gen-Z. Marketing efforts must be as diversified as the mixture of generations within the IHE.

Data Sources and Sample Population

Sample and Sample Population

This study examined outbound marketing data collected through surveys of students attending the subject IHE's career fairs (2017, 2018, 2019). In this study, the researchers analyzed internal marketing data from the IHE's career services of a medium-sized university located in the Southeastern United States (USA) with an average population of 6,000 students.

The self-report online survey was provided to attendees upon exiting the career fair via paper, iPad, or emailed link to career fair attendees to elicit responses to how they became aware of the career fair events. The survey provided respondents with response choices of Personal selling (i.e., faculty or career services personnel), Email, Facebook, Flyers/Signs, the university's communication website, and the career services newsletter. The subject IHE career services did not use other social media types at the time of this study; thus, other social media were not listed as response choices. See Table 1 for sample response sizes.

Outbound marketing strategies are essential means of communication for the subject IHE. The current study examined the subject IHE's career service's outbound marketing strategies to determine their level of effectiveness in creating awareness and moving students through the marketing funnel taking advantage of career fairs. The researchers examined data collected from 1) career fair attendees' self-report surveys, 2) career services' Facebook page, and 3) career services' internal data. The subject IHE's career services' marketing strategies follow the norm of other IHEs using only outbound marketing strategies.

This study examined and linked data directly to invitations to the subject IHE's career fairs placed on the career service's website, university communications website (reach on average 6,000 students), Facebook (only social media platform used), student emails, and flyers/signs. Facebook's messages did not contain calls to action. Faculty were emailed and asked to market career fairs to students (i.e., personal selling). None of the subject IHE's outbound marketing provided any click throughs to register for the event or get more information. The only call to action was a webpage address and the date and time of the career fair. Predominantly, email blasts were sent to all juniors and seniors, except for the nursing and education disciplines (they conduct their own career fairs). The sample size for the email blasts sent directly to currently enrolled juniors and seniors through their on-campus emails were in fall 2017, N = 3,997; spring 2018, N = 3,105 fall 2018, N = 3,280; spring 2019, N = 3,358 and fall 2019, N = 4,110.

Data Analyses

The researchers' examined data from three sources collected by the subjects IHE career services. The following are data analyses used in this study. 1) The researchers analyzed career fair intercept self-report survey data using frequency analyses identifying the marketing strategies most frequently elicited students' attendance (i.e., effectiveness of outbound strategies). Thus, the higher the percentage of attendance, the more successful the strategy in bringing students to the career fair. 2) The subject IHE career services' Facebook page data of likes and followers as to career fairs were examined from 2010 through December 2019 using frequency analysis to examine increases or decreases in its effectiveness. Facebook data were not collected prior to 2010. 3) The researchers compared attendance data (i.e., number of attendees) to survey data about which medium was mentioned to see how the respondent became aware of the career fair. 4) Then, to

determine the effectiveness of email, the number of emails sent out was compared to the number of responses from attendees' self-report surveys identifying email as the strategy that brought them to the career fair. In the "Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations" section presents the details of the data analyses (see Table 1 for findings).

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The research team conducted frequency analyses to determine by what means those who responded to the self-report intercept survey at career fair events reported what attracted them to the career fair. Findings from the survey data from IHE's career fairs in 2017, 2018, and 2019 are below. Survey responses showed that those attending the career fairs reported that their awareness was primarily from two marketing mediums (i.e., personal selling and email) and not from outbound social media marketing. See Table I below.

Table I Outbound Marketing Frequency Analysis

	Fall 2017 Career Fair	Spring 2018 Career Fair	Fall 2018 Career Fair	Spring 2019 Career Fair	Fall 2019 Career Fair
Career Fair Attendees	324	284	276	403	458
Attendance as a % of total # of emails sent	8.10%	9.10%	11.25%	12%	11.10%
Intercept Survey Responses	203	168	219	104	364
Percent Responded to intercept survey	62.70%	59.50%	79.34%	34.80%	79.50%
Response to "how they found out about the career fair"					
Emails Sent	23.65%	23.21%	17.11%	15.71%	25%
Personal Selling Referral (Faculty Invites)	24.63%	25.00%	29.10%	42.14%	36.54%
Career Center Staff Referral (office appointment)	17.73%	20.83%	21.03%	22.14%	11.54%
Other Referral (Facebook, career services newsletter, etc…)	1.97%	1.19%	7.82%	1.43%	2.47%
Flyers/Signs	13.79%	10.71%	4.65%	7.14%	8.97%

According to Perrin and Anderson (2019), Facebook is one of the most widely used social media platforms. However, a content analysis of Facebook data shows since the career services Facebook page's creation, the page had received only 2,140 likes and only 2,227 followers. The Facebook page came into existence in November of 2010 and did not have a dedicated person to manage social media. The Facebook page contained no calls to action. This study's findings are not surprising based on the Pew Research Report, which shows the number of those using Facebook has remained nearly constant since 2016, but in a 2018 report Facebook usage among US teens had dropped in recent years, the same age group that makes up the target market for the IHE (Perrin & Anderson, 2019). This finding brings into question the value of the IHE's Facebook page and of the messages (not part of this study) on IHE's Facebook page.

Conclusions

As Gray (2016) stated, one of the university's goals is for career services staff to prepare students for the 21st century workforce. In the Makela et al. (2014) study, researchers state IHE's are observing increased retention and graduation rates based partly on quality career services. An essential role of quality career centers is to offer value-added services that enhance the IHE's product offering. However, staff must also utilize appropriate marketing strategies for their target markets to communicate services and show how they add value for stakeholders by bringing students and recruiters into the career fair for a successful exchange. The findings, from previous researchers, such as Ghosh et al. (2012) also show the importance of marketing. It shows personnel dedicated to marketing improve internal departments' ability, such as career services, to market their service offerings to students. The findings of the current study show that as proposed by Dakouan, Benabedelouahed, and Anabir (2019) the outcomes of outbound marketing strategies alone were limited as to effectiveness in creating awareness of the IHE's career fairs and warrant further research as to incorporating complementary inbound strategies. There is no way to definitively determine the efficacy of the subject IHE career services' outbound marketing efforts; however, some insights are notable. The data gathered showed why students moved through the purchase funnel from awareness to the purchase (attending) the IHE's career fairs. Although personal selling continually ranked the highest over the seven semesters it is not a stable strategy (faculty change routinely) and it is costly. The use of outbound marketing strategies (i.e., cold calling - personal selling) supports the (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014) study as to Gen-Z's preference for individual attention which lends to the use of inbound marketing (opt-in personal selling). However, although highly effective, personal selling (relationship marketing) is expensive for the IHE. Marketing career services is not the responsibility of faculty and requiring career services staff training of personal selling techniques, paying for benefits and salaries for time spent on this task outside of their area of expertise is not feasible. Career services staff engaging in personal selling results in opportunity cost when it takes staff away from counseling students, attending career functions, and working with new and existing clients. Having career services staff spending their time selling to faculty could also be costly as faculty leave and new faculty are hired. Thus, personal selling of career services events should not be considered the primary medium to sell IHE career services.

There is no way to know from the data analyzed in this study if the content within the outbound messages or the mediums were the issue/driver to the level of awareness of the career fairs as this was not part of the current research study. Nevertheless, the findings reveal personalizing the message through opt-in personal selling from the faculty and career services staff was useful. This finding aligns with the analysis in the Schroth (2019) article on Gen-Z as to workplace coaching with "one-on-one, custom-tailored learning, and development process that uses a collaborative, reflective, goal-focused relationship to achieve professional outcomes that are valued by the coachee" (p. 12). These findings suggest inbound email marketing (opt-in) may be an effective way of reaching students with the career service offerings and developing relationships.

Recommendations

Everyone cannot be reached with inbound marketing. Effective marketing strategies create a space where less selling of services is needed. Today's career services personnel must employ a

reasonably new vocabulary that includes terms like digital marketing, market research (e.g., trends in social media marketing), market penetration, positioning, market audits, and marketing strategies (Ng & Forbes, 2009). Thus, the goal is to generate leads with outbound marketing and use inbound marketing to nurture leads; this is a perfect one-two punch to success. Based on Dakouan, Benabedelouahed, and Anabir (2019) findings and those of the current study, the researchers recommend adopting inbound marketing for those in your brand communities (i.e., students and alumni) and co-branding (i.e., IHE and career services brands) when using outbound marketing strategies.

Although the subject IHE research did not reveal clear directions for marketing strategies, external secondary data from a Pew Research study published in 2019 shows that among 18-29 years old, 67% use Instagram and 62% use Snapchat as their primary social media choice. Of those 18-29 years-old who report using Instagram, 76% use it daily, and 60% use it several times per day. As to Snapchat, of those 18-29 years-old, 77% use it daily, and 68% use it multiple times per day. These findings demonstrate the need for career services to use ongoing market research across target markets to determine the best way to deliver valuable messages through the mediums where students live.

Although this research study examined one IHE career fairs, findings may also apply to other on-campus service providers. The researchers recommend further research of inbound and outbound digial marketing strategies including engaging in co-branding, and brand community strategies for IHE's internal service marketing.

Inbound Marketing

Inbound marketing activities show a positive influence on students' preferences toward IHE's brands. Further, Royo-Vela & Hünermund (2016) reported interactive communication services and platforms provided by IHEs create trust and generate benefits because students want to feel involved, resulting in brand familiarity. A 2018 action research study by Bueno et al. (2018) showed that inbound marketing achieved higher conversion levels for postgraduate courses (i.e., registration) at public universities than those found from outbound marketing. Inbound marketing is about creating one-to-one relationships that have a lasting impact on visitors (Hubspot, 2019). The Bueno et al. (2018) study demonstrated the potential from inbound marketing to build a lasting relationship in an educational environment is an outcome of inbound marketing.

Based on previous academic research findings, the researchers recommend inbound marketing as a best practice to increase the number of those taking advantage of educational services provided by IHE's career services to build lasting one-to-one relationships. Inbound marketing is focused on being found by customers, attracting them through helpful, relevant content, and providing them with a means to contact the organization.

To be successful today means breaking through the marketing clutter with targeted, relevant, and quality messages aligned with potential consumers' interests that pull potential consumers during their purchasing journey. Using inbound marketing platforms enables the marketer to monitor digital campaigns online, through email, or social media. Platforms provide options to personalize messages, develop web and landing pages, implement A/B testing, search engine optimization, and set up an automated email that sends the right content to the right consumer at the right time (Hubspot Academy, 2019).

The researchers recommend inbound marketing strategies (i.e., publish interesting and useful information on the web and social media) including calls to action that create click through

to get more information or register for an event. Using SEO provides delivery of what the potential consumer is looking for and interested in via the medium of their choice. Inbound marketing and SEO provide marketing tools needed to produce messages that move potential consumers through the purchase funnel by thoroughly engaging students and promoting brand awareness of the IHE's career service to other target markets such as alumni, parents, and faculty. The following highlights a couple of inbound marketing tools for which outbound strategies can easily convert to inbound strategies.

Inbound Opt-in Email Messaging

Contrary to what some believe, email is not a thing of the past for calls-to-action. Email is owned media (i.e., asset or platform that the IHE owns, controls, and utilizes). Strategic opt-in email (i.e., email a potential consumer has signed up for on a website or special banner ad) campaigns containing inbound marketing and calls to action are an effective method for reaching and building relationships between the career services and IHE students (Hubspot Academy, 2019).

Inbound Website Messaging. A website is another form of owned digital media. A successful website offers inbound information converting leads to customers. Conversion times are anywhere from 15 minutes to three to six months or more. If the website's content is not reaching and converting the target audience into customers, then the right inbound content is not being created. The website's success may be measured by referral channels, website visits, calls-to-action taken, and form responses. Understanding where the potential customer searches for information is as relevant as the website itself. Understanding where to search means determining placement in search engines, links to blogs, social media sites, and links in emails for calls to action. Without engaging in calls to action, the website is not doing its job. A sure way to get a call to action is to offer something in return, such as a YouTube video directly related to career-related services (Hubspot Academy, 2019).

Brand Communities

Muniz Jr & O'Guinn (2001) introduced the concept of a brand community. They defined it as "a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand" (p. 412). They identified traditional markers of brand communities as "1) shared consciousness, 2) rituals and traditions, and 3) a sense of moral responsibility" (Muniz Jr & O'Guinn, 2001, p. 413). Brand communities offer opportunities for individuals to connect socially, either face-to-face or online (Gai et al., 2016) suggest that "universities must engage in online virtual communities by co-creating brand meanings with students and alumni" to attract new students (p. 195). Their research found that students seeking study abroad opportunities who participate in online communities report the importance of a university's brand (Gai et al., 2016). Career services can participate in communities by sharing alumni's job placement and career successes and by offering events where brand community members participate on or off-campus.

Outbound Marketing

Because inbound marketing does not return results immediately, and IHE campuses are made up of many different generations of students, outbound traditional marketing tools (e.g., advertising

and promotions) should be combined with inbound marketing. Both are beneficial for IHE's in-house services as they reach different age-ranges and demographics with varying rates of return on the investment. It is recommended a team is dedicated full time to implement, manage, and analyze social media platforms. These platforms disseminate massive volumes of user-generated content, some which convey similar and overlapping information regardless of how many marketing strategies are used. With a staff member dedicated to traditional marketing strategies, social media marketing, website, email, marketing analytics, and trends, they can identify patterns. Changes in strategy and messages can be identified and addressed in real-time.

Limitation and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. It is limited in scope to data from the subject IHE Career services career fairs across five academic semesters. Data from the self-report intercept surveys also limits the study. By using data from IHEs self-report intercept surveys and internal records from the IHE's career services office, the study's findings are useful to inform other IHE service providers of best practices.

According to Mailchimp (2017), open rates for email averages around 23.42% for the education and training industry. Future research should survey students to whom career fair promotional emails were sent but who did not attend to determine if they opened the email; if so, did they read beyond the subject line, and if so, what were the reasons behind not attending. A well-constructed email helps clarify the effectiveness of email promotions and of both the medium and message.

Today's college students are known for their online and social media presence which lends well to internet and social media marketing (Parasuraman & Grewal, 2000). Although, technology has been suggested as a critical influencer in the value creation process, monitoring the subjects IHE's technology to determine its effectiveness in moving potential customers through the purchase funnel was inhibited (Meuter et al., 2000). At the time of this study, the subject IHE's career services office did not have trained staff members dedicated to marketing. The subject IHE's career services did not market career fairs through Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, or its websites. Although personal selling and email were the respondents' top marketing choices, future studies should focus on effectiveness of outbound and inbound marketing strategies.

The study was limited in scope and time to one IHE. Future research recommends conducting a more extensive study across multiple IHEs of varying sizes and demographics. Further, a longitudinal study across multiple semesters of observations and data are recommended. Both the messages and mediums should be measured to determine effectiveness on moving the potential customer to awareness and through the purchase funnel. Also, knowing what types of content will go viral can help on-campus services build content that is more likely to be shared. Berger and Milkman (2012) found that content is likely to go viral if the message is positive. Information likely to be shared would increase attendance and awareness of events and services available. This study found that *the amount of emotion content evoked influenced transmission*, thus career services could increase transmission by using messaging that appeals to the emotions (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

The current study's research did not reveal any best promotional strategy for marketing IHE's internal services. Nevertheless, researchers have studied social media marketing in recruiting students to attend IHEs (Gai et al., 2016). However, using outbound or inbound marketing using social media to persuade and engage enrolled students to take advantage of IHE

career services has not been thoroughly studied. Studies show with ever-tightening marketing budgets, social media marketing is one messaging medium that is popular and affordable. Social media can assist on-campus professional organizations and, if used wisely (i.e., right medium for the target audience and right message), it is engaging with the audience while saving money because "… social media are viewed as cheaper and more effective than traditional media" (Berger & Milkman, 2012, p. 193). However, using outbound or inbound marketing using social media to persuade and engage currently enrolled students to take advantage of IHE career services has not been thoroughly studied. The challenge lies in finding the best ways to utilize social media to reach specific student clusters (e.g., traditional – non-traditional or generational) at IHEs. The subject IHE's research, combined with 2019 Pew Research, demonstrates marketing through Facebook for the current IHE's college-age students is ineffective. The findings of 2019 Pew Research support WSI (2013) notion that effective marketing strategies are those that adapt to various stakeholders and demographics needs. Future research should examine social media preferences for multiple age groups and demographics and its effectiveness for marketing internal services at IHE's.

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