SCORING POINTS ONLINE:
COLLEGE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENTS' BRAND POSITIONING THROUGH
COMMUNICATIONS ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Joshua David Meyer

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Chapel Hill
2008

Approved by:

Lois A. Boynton, Ph.D.

Frederick O. Mueller, Ph.D.

John Sweeney, M.Ed.

ABSTRACT

JOSHUA DAVID MEYER: Scoring Points Online: College Athletics Departments'
Brand Positioning Through Communications on the World Wide Web

(Under the direction of Lois A. Boynton, Ph.D.)

For years, public relations, marketing, and advertising scholars have recognized the importance of brand positioning when it comes to corporations and organizations. But as athletics departments have blossomed into major sources of revenues and expenses at colleges and universities, no significant research was found that addressed their brand positioning. This study attempts to fill that gap by analyzing how athletics departments present themselves online through their sports information departments' communications. A qualitative content analysis was used to develop key brand themes in a sample of athletics departments' mission statements, then another qualitative study examined the prevalence of the major themes over the period of a month in those athletics departments' online communications. Findings of this analysis show that the selected athletics departments' online communications do not differentiate the universities in regards to the brand themes their mission statements present. Implications of this study are discussed and further research is suggested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed my master's thesis without the love and guidance of many people. First and foremost, I wish to thank my wife, Susan Meyer. It was her support that first drove me to pursue graduate education and if not for her continued positive reinforcement, not to mention her tireless work as the family bread-winner, I never would have made it. I am also extremely grateful for the many years of affection and advice from my parents, Michael and Voleta Meyer. Finally, I would like to thank my committee chair Lois Boynton, who has somehow managed to put up with my repeated grammatical errors, and all the dedicated professors I have worked with at UNC-Chapel Hill.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Collegiate athletics have become an integral part of American culture. Upwards of 100,000 fans routinely pack the football stadiums at universities on Saturdays in the fall to cheer their teams on. Major athletics departments can rake in millions of dollars every year from ticket sales, merchandise sales, and donations. All the while, schools are constantly building bigger and brighter facilities to attract the best athletic recruits.

Despite all the buildup of college sports programs, they remain, more than anything, a reflection of their universities. When teams win national championships, their schools' application numbers have been shown to increase the following year. When universities like Virginia Tech have tragedies, sporting events are where students and alumni come together to mourn. And finally, when sports teams like the lacrosse squad at Duke University are shown in a bad light, the negative image affects the school.

Because of all the monetary concerns heaped upon them and their powerful reflection upon universities, athletics departments now must maintain and hone their reputation like any major corporation would. Like most large businesses, these departments create mission statements to relate their purpose, strategy, values, and behavioral standards to publics. Sports information departments, a subset of athletics departments, are entrusted with preserving a strong image that is reflective of those mission statements in their communications. Sports information departments' most-

visible outlet is often a Web site, which must address multiple stakeholders such as the media, donors, recruits, students, and casual fans.

Although researchers in the fields of public relations, marketing, and advertising have devoted studies to the brand personality and brand positioning of corporations and universities, no significant research was found that addressed how college athletics departments manage their reputations. This paper will begin to fill that gap by analyzing how athletics departments present themselves online through their sports information departments' communications. A qualitative content analysis was used to develop key brand positioning concepts in a sample of athletics departments' mission statements, then another qualitative study examined the prevalence of the major concepts over the period of a month in those athletics departments' online communications.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to properly examine the online communications of athletics departments, several terms and concepts must first be defined and examined through non-scholarly sources as well as previous scholarly research. First and foremost, the formation and current state of collegiate athletics departments must be explored. For athletics departments to be examined in terms of their marketing and public relations, like other businesses and organizations, the available research on branding and positioning will also be considered. Because this study will place importance on the structure, significance, and use of organizations' mission statements, the previous research on those, too, must be appraised. And finally, with the focus on online communications of athletics departments, recent research on the Internet and organizations' use of it will be scrutinized.

Athletics departments

The first intercollegiate sporting event in the United States was between several rowing clubs from Harvard and Yale in 1852 (College athletics, n.d.), but it was not until the formation of the predecessor to the National Collegiate Athletic Association in 1905 that college athletics gained the strong organization they now possess. Today, the NCAA has a voluntary membership of about 1,200 institutions in three legislative and competitive divisions (NCAA history, n.d.). Those colleges all have athletics departments, each with the purpose to build successful sports programs and guide student-athletes.

In recent years, spending among college athletics departments has grown at an exponential rate. The average budget for athletics rose at a pace of more than double the increases in university spending at Division I schools from 1995-2001. Spending on Division I athletics increased by more than 25%, compared to 10% for university spending after inflation (Sylwester, 2004). For decades, athletics departments have mostly relied on ticket and merchandise revenues, media and marketing rights, and private donations to fund athletic scholarships, facilities, and travel expenses. Recently, though, the level of sophistication in gaining funds has increased as athletics departments and booster clubs have been forced to keep up with an arms race in the NCAA.

Ohio State University's athletic budget for 2007-08 was more than $109 million, the largest in the nation and the biggest in the history of college sports. Included in that budget was funding for 36 varsity sports teams and an average of $110,000 spent on each of Ohio State's 980 athletes. The athletics spending has increased despite the Ohio legislature decreasing annual support for state universities. OSU instituted its highest annual tuition increases in nearly 40 years in response to losing state funds, but the self-sufficient athletics department operated in the black, bringing in more than $104 million in revenue in 2006-07 (Weinbach, 2007).

Ohio State is not alone in bringing in big dollars, much of which is coming from dedicated boosters. Oklahoma State University, for instance, is still figuring out all its plans for the $165 million pledge from billionaire alumnus T. Boone Pickens, and the University of Oregon has reaped the benefits of a $100 million donation from Nike founder Phil Knight. Thanks in large part to the Gator Boosters, the University of Florida's athletics department took in $82.4 million in revenue in 2006-07. The Florida

Alumni Association has given the athletics department a $42-million endowment, but has plans to increase it to $175 million, enough to permanently endow every scholarship for every sport. Like Ohio State, Florida operated in the black last year and donated $6 million of its revenue to the university (O'Keefe, 2007).

The unparalleled growth in giving to athletics departments has been widespread across the NCAA. A study found that in 1998, sports accounted for 14.7% of alumni gifts to American universities, but that by 2003, athletics gifts accounted for 26% of the overall numbers (O'Keefe, 2007). In 2006-07, 27 athletics programs raised more than $20 million apiece and 10 programs brought in more than $30 million each. The University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill led the way in private athletics donations with more than $51 million, followed by ACC rival, the University of Virginia. The Chronicle of Higher Education found that America's biggest athletics departments and booster clubs raised more than $1.2 billion in 2006-07 and that colleges in the nation's six premier athletic conferences raised more than $3.9 billion for capital expenditures alone from 2002-07 (Wolverton, 2007). The rising numbers of private donations for athletics mirror the trend nationally for universities, which saw charitable contributions grow by 9.4% in 2006 to $28 billion, according to an annual survey by the Council for Aid to Education. The top fundraising university in 2006 was Stanford University, which brought in $911.16 million, and the top school from the ACC was Duke at ninth overall with $332.03 million (Council for Aid to Education, 2007).

Most big-time college athletics programs, however, do not break even financially. In the NCAA's most-recent revenues report, the 181 Division I-A schools were $600,000 in the red on average in 2003 (AP, Cashing in, 2007). Numerous studies, though, have

shown that athletic success translates to more alumni giving to universities as a whole. For instance, a study of alumni giving from 1973 to 1990 found that a football bowl appearance correlated with an increase in giving by 40% (Baade & Sundberg, 1996). Another study found that unlike at private institutions, public universities saw a 35% increase in alumni giving when the school reached the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (Baade & Sundberg, 1996).

The correlation between athletic success and sales of merchandise is hard to dispute. Collegiate Licensing Company, which represents 82 Division I-A universities for merchandise licensing, releases its rankings for top-selling institutions each year. For the first time in five years, the University of Texas-Austin knocked North Carolina from No. 1 in royalties in 2005-06 by taking in a record $8.2 million (AP, Longhorns hook record, 2006). That just happened to be the year in which the Longhorns won their first national championship in football since 1970. Texas remained tops in royalties in 2006-07, beating out Notre Dame (Maher, 2007). Florida rode its national championships in football and men's basketball to third place in merchandise revenue in 2006-07, up from sixth for the previous year. The Gators earned nearly $6 million, all of which went to the university, not the athletics department (Clark, 2007).

Another major resource of funds for athletics departments is lucrative television contracts. The NCAA, which enjoys tax-exempt status, earned nearly $563 million in revenue in 2006-07 with $503 million coming from its basketball television contract with CBS. Some $332 million was distributed to the NCAA member conferences and schools with more than half of it going to student-athlete welfare, academic-enhancement, and other funds. The remaining $231 million was to be paid out according to schools' success

6

in the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament (Wieberg, 2006b). In the 2006 tournament, George Mason University's shocking first trip to the Final Four netted the northern Virginia school more than $1 million from the CBS contract alone (Wieberg, 2006a). College football and its bowl games also provide a financial boon, particularly to schools whose conferences are part of the Bowl Championship Series. The Atlantic Coast Conference, the Big 12 Conference, the Big East Conference, the Big Ten Conference, the Pacific 10 Conference, the Southeastern Conference, and Notre Dame earned $118 million apiece for their members through bowl television contracts in 2005-06. Fox's contract to broadcast the Fiesta Bowl, Orange Bowl, Sugar Bowl, and the national championship game through 2010 is valued at $330 million. ABC's contract to broadcast the Rose Bowl through 2014 is valued at $300 million (Lemke, 2006). On top of the national broadcasting rights, individual athletics departments can sell off their television, radio, and marketing rights to the highest bidder. Louisiana State University, for instance, has a 10-year, $74.5-million contract that consolidates all its media rights under CBS Collegiate Sports Properties. The University of Tennessee, meanwhile, has a contract with Host Communications that will guarantee it $83.4 million over 10 years, along with $15.4 million for capital improvements to athletics facilities (McCarthy, 2006).

Football and men's basketball programs are most frequently scrutinized by researchers because they are overwhelmingly the biggest revenue generators across college athletics (Perline, 2007). According the U.S. Office of Postsecondary Education, the 123 NCAA Division I schools earned nearly $2.4 billion in revenues from football and men's basketball in 2006-07. Other men's sports earned nearly $178 million, bringing the total revenues for all Division I men's sports to over $2.56 billion.

7

Meanwhile, all the Division I women's sports combined for merely $283 million in revenues (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Title IX legislation, which turned 35 years old in 2007, requires that colleges offer equal opportunities for both sexes if they receive federal financial assistance (Pennington, 2002). Because men's Olympic sports such as wrestling, track, tennis, swimming and diving, crew, and fencing rarely bring in much money, they are often the programs cut as schools try to reach Title IX compliance (Vegosen, 2007). Football and men's basketball typically end up paying the bills as athletics departments attempt to expand offerings for women (Pennington, 2002).

The opportunities for increased revenues are not the only reasons athletics departments continue to pour money into their football and men's basketball programs, though. For more than 20 years, the media have used the term "Flutie Factor" to describe the potential impact a successful athletics program can have on attracting student applications, and not just among student-athletes (McEvoy, 2006). Former NFL quarterback Doug Flutie is perhaps best known for his college career at Boston College and his "Hail Mary" pass that lifted the Eagles past powerhouse University of Miami 47-45 on Nov. 23, 1984 (Doug Flutie, n.d.). Flutie went on to win the Heisman Trophy, college football's top individual award, beating out Ohio State's Keith Byars in voting by 989 points (Heisman Trophy, n.d.). The term "Flutie Factor" arose when admissions applications at Boston College increased by 30% after Flutie's Heisman year (McEvoy, 2006). There are some inconsistencies correlating the applications to Flutie's award, however, as BC had a great season as a team, tying for its best finish ever at fifth in The Associated Press Top 25 (Boston College 2007 Football Media Guide, All-Time Polls, n.d.).

There have been numerous studies that investigated the connection between successful sports teams and university applications. Winning percentage in football and men's basketball have been shown to increase applications, while a national championship in either of those sports has been shown to provide a significant boost. Studies have also shown athletic success to have a more significant, positive effect on out-of-state applications as well as applications from male students. McEvoy (2006) attempted to isolate the team success variable in order to determine the specific effect a Heisman Trophy contender had on applications. He examined universities with players in the top five in Heisman voting from 1997 to 2000 and their application rates against control groups of schools, finding a 6.59% increase in undergraduate applicants in the year after a player placed in the top five in Heisman voting.

Even community and junior colleges, which do not possess the high profiles that members of the NCAA have, are learning the benefits of starting athletics programs. More than 40 athletics departments have joined the National Junior College Athletic Association since 2003, bringing the organization's membership to more than 1,000. The growth mostly comes from public colleges that feel pressure to attract and satisfy local 18-to-24-year-olds who seek traditional college experiences (Ashburn, 2007). Across the country, smaller four-year universities are adding football programs to attract more men to increasingly female campuses. Officials from these universities say football can bring in more tuition-paying students than any other activity. From 1996-2006, nearly 50 colleges and universities, the majority of which were small colleges, instituted or reinstituted football programs. Seton Hill, formerly an all-women's college in Pennsylvania, started a football program four years after going co-ed and saw its male

9

enrollment increase to 41% from 18% in that span (Pennington, 2006). The fact that football teams at smaller NCAA universities, often playing in the Football Championship Subdivision or what was formerly known as Division I-AA, tend to lose money does not deter administrators. Leaders at Lamar University, a Texas school with about 8,000 students, say that a football team could potentially bring in 2,000 more students and up to $6 million in federal and state appropriations, which are based on enrollment size (Keys, 2007). An increase in enrollment is not the only positive that can come from athletics departments, though.

Researchers also have analyzed the connection between high-visibility athletics programs and the academic missions of higher education. Basically, the question has been: Can a successful sports program increase the value of a university's degree and the prestige of its graduates? One recent study (Lovaglia & Lucas, 2005) aimed to determine if application increases spurred in part by the "Flutie Factor" result in a higher quality of students and improved academic reputation at a university. Freshmen students, who had made their own college selection shortly before the study, were asked to rank the value of graduates from various universities. Coders rated those same universities by athletic performance alone. The study found that states with highly visible athletics programs were rated as having university graduates who made more-important contributions to society.

Whether people want to admit it or not, the days of purely amateur athletics are over at the collegiate level. Whether their goals are to increase revenues and donations or increase enrollment and prestige for their universities, athletics departments are behaving

more and more like major corporations. And as such, athletics departments must define

their brands and position themselves in a crowded marketplace.

Brand personality and positioning

For decades, the concepts of brand personality or identity and brand positioning

have been studied and developed by researchers in marketing, advertising, and public

relations. Aaker & Fornier's (1995) article presented three perspectives about brand

personality that view a brand as having a distinct personality that can occupy a specific

place in a consumer's mind. Allen and Olson examined those concepts through

psychological approaches such as narrative theory to define personality as "the set of

meanings constructed by an observer to describe the 'inner' characteristics of another

person" (p. 392). And as such, creating a brand personality is the literal personification of

a brand, attributing intentional behaviors to it. Fournier added that a brand "is treated as

an active, contributing partner in the dyadic relationship that exists between the person

and the brand" (p. 393). Aaker, meanwhile, took a psychological approach to brand

personality, searching for "human characteristics associated with a brand" (p. 393).

Aaker's (1997) rigorous effort to develop a framework to measure brand

personality was an important step forward in the research of the symbolic meaning of

brands. Drawing from psychological research on the "Big Five" characteristics of human

personality (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism),

Aaker defined five dimensions of brand personality. Aaker's brand dimensions of

sincerity, excitement, and competence "tap an innate part of human personality" (p. 353),

yet the facets of sophistication and ruggedness that were found are unique to brands. To

this day, Aaker's framework is the most-dominant viewpoint on brand dimensions, and

has been used to research topics such as major corporations' reputation management and online communications (e.g., Chun & Davies, 2001; Tian, 2005). One study that examined Aaker's five brand dimensions (Austin, Siguaw, & Mattila, 2003) found that the framework does not generalize to individual brands within the product category of restaurants, and that the framework often leads to too much interpretation by subjects to be effective. "This variable nature of the meaning of some traits likely accounts for some of the cross-loading items that produced poor fits … for individual brands examined." (p. 89). While Aaker's dimensions have been replicated in a university setting for business schools (Opoku, Abratt, & Pitt, 2006), no significant studies have used the framework to examine neither universities' overall brand positions nor those of their athletics departments.

As the dominant framework, Aaker's five brand dimensions have also been studied in different environments and criticized for a lack of generalizability. Aaker (1997) herself stated that the personality for brands may not translate across cultures:

> Although research has shown that the human personality dimensions remain robust across cultures, the same may not be so for brand personality because of differences in the antecedents of the two constructs. Consequently, the current scale might not be appropriate for measuring brand personality in a different cultural context. (p. 355)

Whether through Aaker's dimensions or other methods, researchers continue to study the ways in which brands are positioned. A brand's positioning is the way it "is defined by consumers on important attributes – the place the [brand] occupies in the consumers' minds relative to competing products" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007, p. 185). The importance of strong brand positioning cannot be overestimated. An organization's

brand positioning is the major way in which it can gain a competitive advantage over rivals and detract criticisms, and a definitive identity can provide internal benefits such as the ability to attract quality personnel and breed employee motivation (Opoku, Abratt, & Pitt, 2006). One of the most-popular tools organizations can use to establish a brand position for both internal and external stakeholders is a mission statement.

Mission statements

Mission statements are the statements that define an organization's purpose, or what it wants to accomplish in its industry (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007). Such statements distinguish organizations from others in the same field. Mission statements are significant documents for understanding organizations' operations and behaviors, articulating "the goals, dreams, behaviors, culture and strategies of companies more than any other document" (Jones & Kahaner, 1995, p. ix). They stress "values, *positive* behaviors, and guiding principles within the framework of the corporation's *announced* belief system and ideology" (Swales & Rogers, 1995, p. 227, emphasis in original). Mission statements "are the corporate version of an ego ideal, a standard by which the corporation is supposed to measure itself and emulate, and whose demand for perfection it should strive to fulfill" (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth, 1997, p. 243). Whether they are a factor in creating company competence or a result of it, well-crafted mission statements have been connected to greater financial success (David & David, 2003), including a higher average return rate on stockholder equity than what is seen in organizations without mission statements (Rarick & Vitton, 1995).

One significant issue with mission statements is that they are often handed down by an organization's leadership or dominant coalition, meaning other members of the

13

organization do not necessarily feel connected to the statement or abide by it. Researchers

have been adamant that consistency in messaging between organizations' mission

statements and their other communications is important to avoid confusing stakeholders

(Levine, 1998). Displaying clarity allows organizations to succinctly represent their

personalities in communications and their mission statements, which are the "most public

component of organizations' strategic plan" (Rarick & Vitton, 1995, p. 11). The most

effective mission statements are market-oriented, specific, realistic, distinctive, and

motivating (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007). Poorly organized and written mission statements

can negate potential positive effects:

> Although Mission Statements [sic] are the instruments of culture,
> managerial ethos, and ideology, their impact can be blunted when they get
> to the level of the shop floor. They may lack clarity, relevance, salience,
> veridicality (truthfulness or representativeness), inspiration, and/or
> engagement by management. They may also impose an inordinate number
> of constraints on individuals' ability to perform their jobs. Clearly there
> are many grounds for Mission Statement's [sic] negligible impact.
> (Fairhurst, Jordan & Neuwirth, 1997, p. 244)

As organizations strive to have a positive impact with their mission statements,

researchers have found such statements to contain elements of corporate social

responsibility, since they are important tools for self-presentation (Chun & Davies, 2001;

Tian, 2005). Carroll's (1979) original four-part definition of CSR held that corporations

have economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities to the society. The

definition "sought to argue that businesses can not only be profitable and ethical, but that

they should fulfill these obligations simultaneously" (Carroll, 2000, p. 35). Recent

corporate scandals as well as issues surrounding globalization have driven public concern

about public relations and CSR, and:

As as result, companies in general need to build the image of being socially responsible to win back the public trust and compete in the global market. Thus, companies adopt corporate social responsibility into their management strategies to build and maintain a positive image and therefore improve their competitive positions, and public relations activities are usually employed to communicate the information about companies' performance in corporate social responsibility. (Tian, 2005, p. 3)

With the proliferation of corporate Web sites as communication tools for businesses, Tian argued for the usefulness of putting mission statements online:

Companies should include a mission statement on their Web sites to communicate with their stakeholders about their goals, values, strategies, and so on. Presenting positions on corporate social responsibility through mission statements online will help the stakeholders recognize the positive image of the company in a convenient and efficient way. (p. 15)

The use of corporate Web sites to illuminate businesses' social responsibility through their mission statements is becoming an important focus for public relations researchers (Esrock & Leichty, 1998). Such studies will continue develop along with the most-quickly evolving channel for corporate communication, the Internet.

The Internet and e-reputation

In 2005, the United States Department of Commerce completed a comprehensive study and released a report titled *Computer and Internet Use in the United States: 2003* (2005). The report detailed the proliferation of computers and the Internet in America. In 2003, 70 million households (62%) had one or more computer, up from 56% in 2001 and just 8% in 1984. Sixty-two million households, or 55%, had Internet access in 2003, which was up from 50% in 2001 and 18% in 1997. Of important note for organizations and corporations, the study found that 78% of adult Internet users sought out information

on products or services online, and 32% purchased products or services online, compared to a measly 2.1% in 1997.

As the Internet has become a powerful channel for organizations' communications, numerous marketing, advertising, and public relations researchers have turned their attention to this new technology (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Kimelfeld & Watt, 2001; Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000). Brand Web sites are "the final destination of interactive advertising and the form which combines the fullest degree of rich interactivity and multimedia" (Macias, 2003, p. 32), and as such, they have an unmatched ability to permit organizations to have a dialogue with stakeholders on an individual level. Organizational Web sites have been shown to rise above the restrictions of media gatekeepers and speak directly to publics. And the audiences that Web sites reach are "more active, information-seeking audiences than the more passive publics who are reached via traditional mass media" (Esrock & Leichty, 1999, p. 456). By making their sites more interactive, organizations "can improve comprehension[,] and the relationship [with audiences] is influenced by involvement with the product and experience with the Web" (Macias, 2003, p. 41). Organizations have turned to interactive online materials such as Weblogs to communicate their brand positions. A 2006 study by JupiterResearch, an authority on the impact of the Internet and emerging consumer technologies on business, found that nearly 70% of large companies planned to implement corporate blogs by the end of the year. "The consumer appeal of blogs is that they appear authentic. Blogs are bringing a level of humanity back to the faceless corporation" (Yeomans, 2006, p. 15). E-marketing as a whole is expanding at a rapid pace and is having a great impact

upon customer and business market behaviors (Sheth & Sharma, 2005). Customers now

can have a more intimate connection with a brand and the company through its Web site.

To properly take advantage of all the possibilities of the Internet, organizations

must concentrate on their e-reputation mix. The mix, as defined by Chun (2004), consists

of a company's e-character, e-identity, and e-experience. The e-character is at the top of

the e-reputation mix for organizations and "is a reflection of how they position and

behave themselves in the market and to their stakeholders through the Internet medium"

(p. 1). After an organization's e-character dimensions have been identified, they must be

translated into an e-identity. The key components to a corporation's e-identity are its

mission statement, advertising, logos and symbols, names, and design. Mission

statements form an important part of the e-identity because they allow "potential

stakeholders such as degree applicants or potential employees [to] often get an overview

of a firm by browsing … on the homepage" (p. 2). Finally, the e-experience is how

stakeholders perceive an organization and its e-identity and e-character after visiting its

Web site. The main parts of a corporation's e-experience are its consistency, content,

protection, speed, and interactivity. Not maintaining an up-to-date and consistent online

presence can be extremely counterproductive, according to Chun:

> Gaps between the visionary statements on the corporate [Web site] and the
> content of product advertisement will cause confusion over the corporate
> image. Inconsistent messages or gaps in the following areas can be
> detrimental to their reputation; the consistency in positioning, internal
> consistency within a [Web site], consistency between what is promised
> online and what will be delivered offline, consistency across various
> media, and consistency across different division and office locations of the
> same company. (p. 3)

The benefits of having a strong, consistent online presence have not been lost on college athletics departments. It seems each major college athletics department, and most minor ones for that matter, has an official Web site to distribute communications to its stakeholders. Some schools like Iowa State have signed away their Internet rights for contracts that pay more than $55 million over 10 years, while others like Louisiana State University charge die-hard fans monthly subscription fees in efforts to make millions in revenues by themselves (AP, Cashing in on the Web, 2007). Even some coaches have gotten in on the action, developing their own personal Web sites to make revenue off advertisements, subscriptions, fan clubs, and merchandise. Dennis Franchione, though, may have contributed to his ouster as Texas A&M football coach by producing Web materials inconsistent with his university's ideals (Texas A&M Athletics, 2007). Through his CoachFran.com Web site, Franchione and a third-party vendor established a secret e-mail newsletter called "VIP Connection" that was made available to big-time donors for a fee of $1,200 per year. Franchione did not report the $37,806.32 in profits from the newsletter to the NCAA as required. He also made several comments about prospective student-athletes, which could be violations of NCAA rules, and he released information about closed bowl practices, injuries, and depth charts, which could violate Big 12 Conference standards of sportsmanship. As athletics departments foray into the World Wide Web, potential controversies like that abound. Questions concerning what brand personalities athletics departments are presenting in their mission statements and whether they are living up to their stated reputations through their online communications will continue to require research attention.

Summary of the literature

The development of major college athletics departments from amateur groups at the turn of the 20th century to corporation-like organizations today necessitates evolving research on their work and communications. Athletics departments can be seen as the face of universities with millions of fans attending games and even more watching at home. Sports programs have been shown to increase student applications, boost student body diversity, and even enhance university prestige (Lovaglia & Lucas, 2005; McEvoy, 2006; Pennington, 2006). Athletics departments' budgets have swelled, with some even eclipsing $100 million, as they have tried to distinguish themselves from others on and off the field. The big business of athletics departments relies on consistent funding from donors of all financial levels as well as ticket and merchandise sales, and sales of media rights (Maher, 2007; McCarthy, 2006; Wolverton, 2007). Is it any wonder athletics departments are run more like major corporations nowadays?

Corporations long ago realized the importance of developing a brand personality and position to differentiate themselves from competitors. Researchers like Aaker (1997) have sought to develop key concepts to describe brands' personalities. Aaker's dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness translate well to certain contexts in the corporate world, but they have been shown to be less successful in other arenas (Austin, Siguaw, & Mattila, 2003). Despite the similarities between athletics departments and businesses, Aaker's dimensions and their derivatives are not an adequate fit to examine brand personality related to collegiate sports.

A major tool for analysis of brand personality and positioning as well as corporate social responsibility has been the mission statement (Chun & Davies, 2001; Esrock &

Leichty, 1998; Jones & Kahaner, 1995; Rarick & Vitton, 1995; Tian, 2005). Like

corporations, athletics departments develop mission statements to define their goals and

beliefs, and describe their culture to internal and external audiences. However, mission

statements that do not reflect the reality of an organization or which are not adhered to

can damage an organization's reputation and bottom line (Fairhurst, Jordan, & Neuwirth,

1997).

With the dramatic rise of the Internet (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2005),

companies and athletics departments have turned to their Web sites to distribute their

mission statements as well as other communications to their publics. The development of

a positive e-reputation depends on the careful coordination of all of an organization's

communications materials online (Chun, 2004). And if athletics departments manage to

form a strong e-reputation, there is much money to be made online (AP, Cashing in on

the Web, 2007). In summary, the digital age is in full swing and with a plethora of

competing organizations in the marketplace, it is incumbent upon athletics departments to

make sure their online communications mesh with their stated missions if they hope to be

successful on and off the field.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

This paper will address some of the gaps in the research concerning athletics departments and their communications. A thorough analysis will determine the brand dimensions presented in athletics department's mission statements. Then, athletics departments' online communications will be examined to discover what brand dimensions they present, and if such positioning meshes with that of the mission statements. This paper will address the following questions:

1. What brand dimensions do college athletics departments present in their mission statements?

2. What brand dimensions do college athletics departments present in their online communications?

3. How do the brand dimensions presented in college athletics departments' online communications relate to the brand dimensions presented in college athletics departments' mission statements?

Methods

A qualitative content analysis was employed for this two-pronged study. For the first part of the study, the 12 mission statements of the member institutions of the Atlantic

Coast Conference were analyzed. The second part of the study featured the analysis of online communications of the 12 ACC athletics departments.

Mission statements analysis

The 12 mission statements of the member institutions of the ACC were accessed from the Web. (see Table 1-ACC Web sites and mission statements). The ACC was selected because it is the dominant athletic conference on the southeast coast of the United States and because the researcher has great familiarity with it. One of the six major conferences included in college football's Bowl Championship Series (BCS Championship Series, n.d.) , the ACC was the only Division I conference to place all its teams in the top 60 of the 2006-07 U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup standings, which rank all schools according to athletic performance across all sports (U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup Division I Final Standings, 2007). The ACC is also at the pinnacle of men's college basketball, placing four schools in Forbes' list of the 20 most-valuable basketball programs in the nation in terms of benefits to their universities, their athletics departments, their conferences, and local communities (Schwartz, 2007). The University of North Carolina topped the list, worth $26 million after posting a $16.9 million profit in the 2006-07 season. The ACC is a leader academically as well as athletically, tying the Ivy League by placing three schools in the top 10 of the National Collegiate Scouting Association's 2007 power rankings, which average all schools' U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup ranking, NCAA student-athlete graduation rate, and U.S. News & World Report ranking. The ACC led all Division I conferences with 10 schools in the top 100 (NSCA Collegiate Power Rankings, 2007).

Table 1 – ACC Web sites and mission statements

University	Web site	URL for mission statement
Boston College	bceagles.com	bceagles.cstv.com/genrel/120704aaa.html
Clemson	clemsontigers.com	clemsontigers.cstv.com/school-bio/clem-athdept.html#mission
Duke	goduke.com	goduke.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=4200&KEY=&ATCLID=152723
Florida State	seminoles.com	seminoles.cstv.com/genrel/042601aaa.html
Georgia Tech	ramblinwreck.com	ramblinwreck.cstv.com/genrel/111501aab.html
Maryland	umterps.com	umterps.cstv.com/school-bio/md-mission.html
Miami	hurricanesports.com	hurricanesports.cstv.com/school-bio/mifl-mission-statement.html
North Carolina	tarheelblue.com	tarheelblue.cstv.com/genrel/092601aad.html
N.C. State	gopack.com	ncsu.edu/policies/athletics/POL09.00.3.php
Virginia	virginiasports.com	virginiasports.com/ViewArticle.dbml?DB_OEM_ID=17800&KEY=&ATCLID=1134430
Virginia Tech	hokiesports.com	athletics.vt.edu/mission.html
Wake Forest	wakeforestsports.com	wakeforestsports.cstv.com/school-bio/wake-mission-statement.html

The 12 ACC mission statements were culled from their official Web sites. Only North Carolina State University does not clearly label a mission statement on its athletics department site, but its mission statement was located by searching the university's official Web site. The mission statements ranged in length from 105 words (Georgia Tech) to 352 words (N.C. State); the average length being about 237 words. The mission statements were copied from the Web sites and pasted into Microsoft Word documents for coding purposes. The unit of analysis was sentences. Following Strauss and Corbin' guidelines for qualitative research (1998), open coding was applied first to Boston

23

College's mission statement because it comes first alphabetically, and coding continued through all 12 statements. Axial coding was then performed on the data with the researcher returning to re-examine previous mission statements when new themes are developed. Themes for individual sentences in the mission statements were noted by using the "Comment" function in Microsoft Word, allowing the researcher to highlight coded sections clearly and overlap themes as needed. The themes were collected in tables to determine which emerged from the mission statements as being the most prevalent, which is part of the selective coding process that examines how the findings support or refute theoretical concepts.

Online communications analysis

For the second part of the study, the online communications of the 12 ACC athletics departments were analyzed. The documents were selected only from the athletics departments' official Web sites and only included communications that were posted on the homepage during the month of January 2008. The documents that were analyzed included news releases, game stories, feature stories, notes packages, and Weblog entries. Game stories and other articles that were written by people outside the athletics department staff, such as reporters for The Associated Press, were also analyzed if they were posted on the Web site. Despite not coming directly from the athletics departments, such documents reflect upon those departments when posted on their sites. Communications that were not updated on a consistent basis, such as links with background information on teams and players, were not analyzed. Documents that were not analyzed included statistics, schedules, player and coach biographies that were not

part of an article, ticket notices, audio and video files, merchandising documents, and advertisements.

The documents were collected from each of the 12 ACC athletics departments throughout the month of January. A month of analysis was sufficient because typical athletics departments post between one and 10 documents per day, bringing the total number of documents that were posted during the period of analysis to 1,198. January was selected because it fit into the timetable for this study and because, as the first month in the spring semester for most universities, there were a plethora of sports being played. In addition to football season wrapping up, ACC schools competed in basketball, fencing, ice hockey, skiing, swimming and diving, tennis, track and field, and wrestling in January.

The collected documents from the ACC athletics departments' Web sites were organized according to school and date of release. The releases were again hand-coded by the researcher, but because of the large volume of documents, the unit of analysis was the entire document instead of individual sentences. Each document was analyzed to determine an overarching brand theme based upon all its content, and the results were put into tables to offer a larger picture of the brand themes presented in athletics departments' online communications. The brand themes of the online communications were then compared to the brand dimensions found in the athletics departments' mission statements in order to answer the research questions.

Limitations

Previous researchers who have analyzed mission statements' brand dimensions have chosen to perform quantitative, computer-assisted text analyses in efforts to improve the reliability of the research (Opoku, Abratt, & Pitt, 2006; Tian, 2005). While a qualitative approach can be limiting because is removes replicability, this study benefitted from its qualitative nature because it is exploratory. No major previous research has addressed brand dimensions in athletics departments' mission statements or their online communications. By coding the mission statements in an open manner, not just searching for a set list of dimensions and their derivatives, greater meaning could be found (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Hand-coding the athletics departments' online communications neccessitated a larger unit of analysis than the individual sentences that could be analyzed in the mission statements. While a computer-assisted text analysis could have aided this process, the lack of a set list of words for each brand theme made computer analysis impossible at the time. The flexibility of a researcher to understand different themes is why computer analysis was not used in this study. The results of this study, however, may allow a list of themes to be developed for future research projects.

In a qualitative study such as this, in which the researcher is by nature his or her own research instrument, it is important for the researcher to reflect upon any personal involvement in the topic. Discussing reflexivity issues can help to explain possible biases brought to the research, and ways in which a researcher may avoid or emphasize certain points of view (Gergen, 2000). One bias I bring to this work is my position as a student and fan of two of the ACC's member institutions. I grew up in southwest Virginia as a fan of the University of North Carolina as well as Virginia Tech. I received my

undergraduate degree from Virginia Tech and am pursuing my master's degree at North

Carolina, and I continue to be a fan of both schools' athletics programs. After receiving

my undergraduate degree, I worked as a sports editor at newspapers in Virginia and

North Carolina. Through my work at the newspapers, I covered and worked with all the

ACC athletics departments, but had the most involvement with Duke, North Carolina,

North Carolina State, Virginia, and Virginia Tech. I believe, however, that my familiarity

with these athletics departments was beneficial rather than a hindrance. After reading

thousands of releases from ACC athletics departments over the years, I have a better

understanding of how to interpret what these departments are trying to present than

someone with no experience with the groups would.

This chapter identified the course of analysis for this study. The following chapter

reports the results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' mission statements

and discusses the findings.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF MISSION STATEMENTS ANALYSIS

This chapter presents an overview of the results of the analysis of the ACC

athletics departments' mission statements, as found on their Web sites, identifying the

dominant themes that emerged from coding the mission statements. This chapter also

discusses those results.

Through the analysis of the 12 mission statements of the ACC schools, five

dominant themes emerged while a handful of lesser-used themes were also evident. The

dominant themes were development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair play,

community leader, and athletic achievement. Each of these themes is discussed in the

following sections.

Development of student-athletes

The first theme to emerge from the analysis was development of student-athletes.

This theme refers to statements in which athletics departments describe their commitment

to the growth of student-athletes academically and personally, preparing them for

successful futures. Duke, Maryland, Miami, and N.C. State had the most references to the

development of their student-athletes with six apiece, but the theme was clearly the most

common in all the mission statements. For example, Duke, a university well-known for

its academic standards, stated that:

> [The athletics department's goal of excellence] requires that students
> engaged in intercollegiate athletics be students first, that they be admitted

according to this criterion, that they progress satisfactorily towards a
degree, and that their attrition and graduation rates as student-athletes not
be significantly different from those of non-athletes.

Florida State, which has not had as sterling an academic reputation as Duke, as
evidenced by a recent widespread football cheating scandal (Weiss, 2007), nonetheless
laid out a similar hierarchy: "the decisions and priorities of the Department should always
focus on our student-athletes first, as individuals; second, as students; and third, as
athletes." Wake Forest echoed that sentiment, noting that it considers a student-athlete
"first and foremost a student possessing individual rights, academic abilities, personal
interests, and ambitions comparable to those of other members of the general student
body."

Miami had the highest percentage of the development of student-athletes theme
with over 42%, saying that its goal is "to support through its resources the academic
objectives of its student-athletes, and ensure their progress toward the goal of the
academic degree which each seeks." Duke and North Carolina tied for the second-highest
percentage at 37.5%, with UNC stating that its mission "is to sponsor a broad-based
athletic program that provides educational and athletic opportunities for young men and
women to grow and develop." Six of the schools' mission statements noted the intention
of helping student-athletes progress academically to the best of their potential, while
Clemson, Duke, Florida State, Miami, N.C. State, and Virginia Tech took it a step further
by stating that student-athletes should progress towards or achieve a degree. Clemson and
Virginia Tech chose similar verbiage in the discussion of student-athlete development,

with Virginia Tech saying that its athletics departments should help a student-athletes "advance toward a rewarding career and contribute to society."

University advocate

The second theme to become evident was university advocate, which emerges when athletics departments state their intentions to adhere to their universities' ideals and help reach their universities' goals. Duke noted the theme that its athletics programs are advocates of the university the most times with five, followed with Boston College with four references. All the athletics departments, though, made reference to the idea that they are extensions of their universities and that they must adhere to their universities' missions. Boston College's mission statement was unique in that it brought up the significance of religion at the private school:

> In keeping with our tradition as a Catholic and Jesuit university, rooted in a belief that seeks God in all things, especially human activity, the Boston College Athletic Department offers a broad-based program of intercollegiate athletics, as well as intramural, recreation, and club sport opportunities.

Georgia Tech used an interesting metaphor to describe the importance of its athletics department to the university, saying "The Georgia Tech Athletic Association forms the front porch of the Institute and serves as a gathering place for students, alumni, fans and friends." North Carolina, which had the highest percentage of this theme at 37.5%, pointed out the notion that "student-athletes, coaches, and staff strive to bring credit and recognition to the University." UNC went on to say that its athletics department must "serve the interests of the University." Clemson cited this theme the least at just over 11%, but did clarify that the athletics department will "employ coaches

and staff consistent with university … philosophy and standards of integrity, and moral

conduct." Finally, Florida State described how its athletics department "engenders

support for the University among its many constituent groups including students, faculty,

alumni, and friends at the local, state, and national levels."

Fair play

The third theme, fair play, consists of statements in which athletics departments

pledge their allegiance to the rules and standards of their universities, their conference,

and the NCAA in regards to on-field play and off-field administration. The fair play

theme first emerged during the open coding of Boston College's mission statement,

which said: "The Athletic Department promotes the principles of sportsmanship, fair

play, and fiscal responsibility in compliance with the University, Conference, and NCAA

policies." And while North Carolina and N.C. State did not mention the theme in their

missions, it was an important element for Florida State and Maryland, which brought it

up four times apiece. Florida State's athletics department said that it "strives to be

recognized as a campus leader in terms of its ethics." Maryland, meanwhile, stated that

one of its principles is "to employ coaches and staff members who exhibit high standards

of integrity and ethical behavior, including good sportsmanship." Wake Forest, which

only cited six themes in all, used half of its allotment to fair play, saying:

> All athletic contributors, alumni, other groups, and individuals who
> represent the University's athletic interests, are expected to adhere to the
> policies and procedures established by the University for the governance
> of its athletic program.

The athletics departments that did address fair play typically asserted that they must adhere to NCAA and university rules. N.C. State, for instance, described the high standard of integrity it seeks as "compliance in practice and spirit with NCAA, ACC, and University policies and rules," as well as "the insistence on a high moral code of honor, mutual trust, and personal accountability."

Community leader

The community leader theme refers to statements in which athletics departments describe their greater role in the community through direct service, through leadership, or by acting as force for unity. Boston College did the most to position itself as a community leader, mentioning the theme four times for the highest percentage of use at 30.77%, but all the athletics departments except for Georgia Tech and North Carolina included the idea that they serve a distinct role in the community. Boston College stated that its athletics department must lead "the pursuit of a just society" through its "commitment to the highest standards of integrity, ethics, and honesty." Wake Forest said that its athletics department "provides students, faculty, alumni, and friends an opportunity to share in the life of the collegiate community." Virginia's athletics department stated that it must develop students with strong values of leadership and citizenship while N.C. State noted its responsibility to provide "service to the people of North Carolina." But Clemson had the lone athletics department to specifically say it tries to get out in the community through its objective "to encourage student-athletes, coaches, and staff to participate in appropriate community service activities."

Athletic achievement

The fifth theme, athletic achievement, refers to statements in which athletics departments profess their intention to win or at least compete and perform at a high level. Interestingly, the theme that seems to get the most coaches and athletic administrators hired and fired – athletic achievement – was only the fifth-most-common theme in the athletics departments' mission statements. Clemson used the theme the most frequently, four times, saying that the athletics department should "be recognized as a nationally prominent program, through consistently high levels of performance and accomplishment in athletic competitions." Georgia Tech and North Carolina, meanwhile, devoted the highest percentage of their concepts to athletic achievement at 25%. Georgia Tech said it "allows our student-athletes to compete at the highest levels," while UNC stated that its "athletic programs strive for competitive excellence within the Atlantic Coast Conference or with other similar institutions." The athletics departments at Boston College, Florida State, Virginia Tech, and Wake Forest chose not to address a need for athletic achievement at all in their mission statements. Maryland, though, seemed to say that its athletics programs must live up to the standards of the university by stating the guiding goal:

> To develop and maintain a highly competitive and sound athletic program – reaching a standard of achievement in athletics consistent with our purposes as a University and the excellence of our institution.

Duke, meanwhile, noted that "the measure of 'excellence' when applied to intercollegiate athletics means also a level of performance that frequently will produce winning seasons and the realistic opportunity to compete for team or individual championships."

Lesser-used themes

After the top five most-referenced themes, the majority of athletics departments also mention supporting diversity (15 times), fiscal integrity (13 times), and the quest for excellence (12). Diversity is, however, viewed differently by different universities. Duke mentions meeting "the needs, interests, and abilities of male and female students," while others like Clemson went beyond gender and professed to "support equitable opportunities for all student-athletes, administrators, and staff including women and minorities." Meanwhile North Carolina positioned itself as supporting the most layers of diversity "by offering opportunities for enhanced racial/ethnic, cultural, and geographic representation." Many athletics departments also devoted space in their mission statements to discuss their fiscal integrity. Maryland, for instance, promised to continue "balancing budgets and carrying out sound management practices." And finally, numerous athletics departments said they must engage in a quest for excellence, a concept that seems to encompass every other concept from athletic achievement to the development of student-athletes. "The University's dedication to excellence is an integral part of the Athletic Department's goals and objectives and a primary consideration in our service," according to the Boston College mission statement.

Prevelance of themes

Development of student-athletes constituted the highest percentage of use by the athletics departments at 33% (see Figure 1-Dominant themes in ACC mission statements). University advocate was next, followed by fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement. Only Wake Forest had a theme that made up at least 50% of its total uses, featuring fair play more than any other athletics department. The athletics

34

departments balanced their use of the themes to varying degrees (see Figure 2-Themes in ACC mission statements by university).

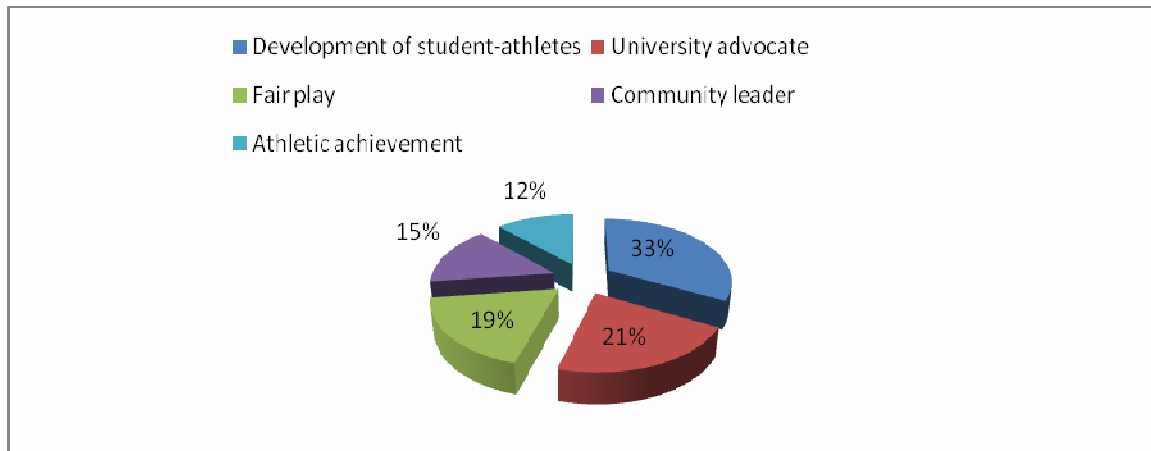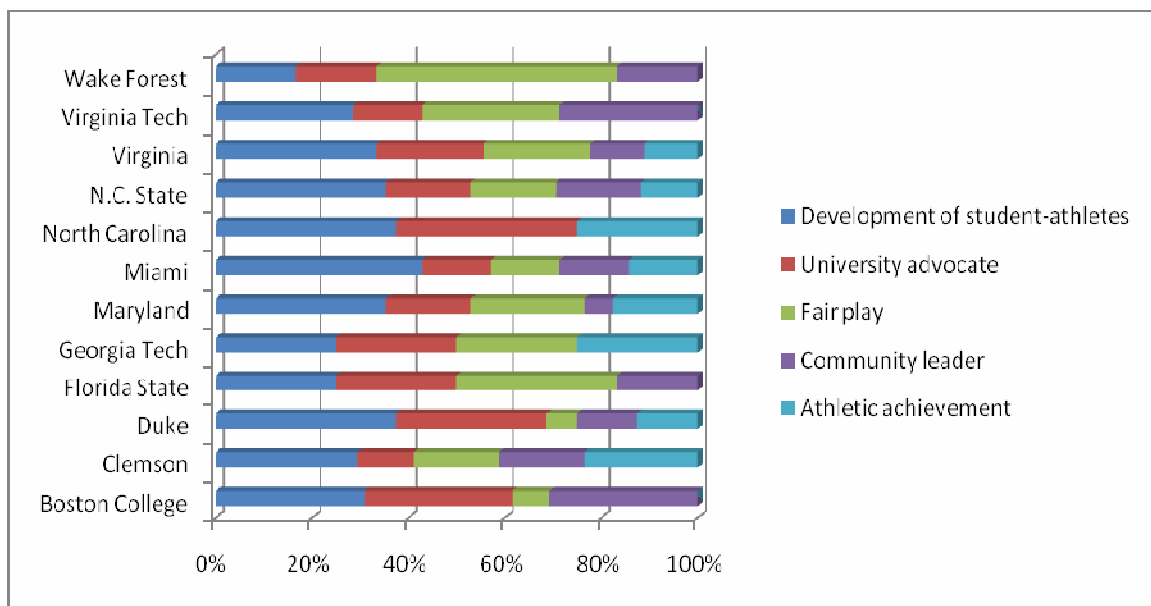**Figure 1 – Dominant themes in ACC mission statements**

Figure 2 – Themes in ACC mission statements by university

Development of student-athletes and university advocate were the only concepts common to all 12 mission statements. Clemson, Maryland, and N.C. State had the most instances of the five concepts with 17 apiece while Georgia Tech had the fewest with four, clearly a reflection of it possessing the shortest mission statement (see Table 2- Dominant theme frequencies in ACC mission statements). On average, each school cited the five key concepts 11.67 times.

Table 2 – Dominant theme frequencies in ACC mission statements

University	Development of student-athletes	University advocate	Fair play	Community leader	Athletic achievement
Boston College	4	4	1	4	0
Clemson	5	2	3	3	4
Duke	6	5	1	2	2
Florida State	3	3	4	2	0
Georgia Tech	1	1	1	0	1
Maryland	6	3	4	1	3
Miami	6	2	2	2	2
North Carolina	3	3	0	0	2
N.C. State	6	3	3	3	2
Virginia	3	2	2	1	1
Virginia Tech	2	1	2	2	0
Wake Forest	1	1	3	1	0
Totals	46	30	26	21	17

This section reported the results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' mission statements and provided a qualitative examination of the themes that emerged. The following section will discuss the deeper meaning of those results.

Discussion of mission statements analysis

This section will delve into the results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' mission statements, offering a context for the themes that emerged. By understanding the results, the brand images which the athletics departments present or hope to present may be seen.

Aaker's (1997) brand dimensions of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness do not all emerge distinctly in the academic and athletic setting of universities' athletics departments. As the themes of development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement became evident, however, there were some linkages to Aaker's dimensions. Development of student-athletes, university advocate, and community leader could all be seen in connection to competence. Meanwhile, fair play could relate to sincerity and athletic achievement to excitement. Despite the commonalities between the athletics departments' themes and Aaker's dimensions, their differences are too great for them to be interchangeable.

Evident but less prominent in the athletics departments' mission statements are the themes of supporting diversity, fiscal integrity, and the quest for excellence. There appears to be little differentiation across athletics departments; all claim to be primarily

concerned with the development of their student-athletes and their contribution to the university's goals.

When it comes to the development of student-athletes, all the athletics departments make mention of their goals to help students reach their full potential academically as well as athletically. Duke attempts to differentiate itself somewhat from the other ACC universities, using the concept six times. As the top-ranked school in the ACC in terms of U.S. News & World Report ranking (eighth nationally) and NCAA graduation rate (16th nationally), this explicit academic achievement goal seems significant (NSCA Collegiate Power Rankings, 2007). While other schools such as Maryland and Miami, also focused on this concept, their academic rankings are not as illustrious. Maryland and Miami are tied for 54th in U.S. News & World Report ranking, with Miami ranked 273rd in graduation rate and Maryland ranked 330th. All the athletics departments positioned themselves as being a university advocate, but some have been a negative reflection rather than a positive one in recent years. Duke, which also used the concept of being a university advocate the most, has seen its men's lacrosse team give the school a black eye. Although the three Duke lacrosse players accused of rape were exonerated, the hard-partying of the team has cast the university and the sport itself in a negative light (Kilgore, 2007). While Miami's athletics department twice cited its role as a university advocate, the uproar following a football brawl in 2006 against Florida International resulted in the university being labeled "Thug U" (Bianchi, 2006). And at Clemson, where the athletics department cited being a university advocate twice, a bench-clearing fight at the end of a football game against South Carolina in 2004 resulted in national outrage and the school forfeiting a trip to a bowl game (South Carolina-

Clemson brawl, n.d.). The athletics departments clearly understand that they are often the face of the university, but they have not always lived up to that responsibility.

Maryland positioned itself as the champion of fair play and adherence to NCAA policies, but its track record has been spotty at best. One of only three ACC schools to have major NCAA infractions over the past 10 years, Maryland's football team was found to have given improper recruiting inducements, including the provision of cash, in 2003 (Major infractions cases, 2003). The other two schools with major NCAA infractions, Georgia Tech (ineligible participation in 2005) and Miami (impermissible recruiting violations, 2003), referenced fair play once and twice respectively. It is difficult to fault athletics departments for saying they will live up to the guidelines from the governing organizations, but it is important that they live up to the standards they set forth.

Boston College positioned itself most as a community leader, citing the theme four times, which is interesting considering it is a private school. A number of state universities, such as N.C. State, described the responsibilities they have to citizens of their state who pay the bills, but the private schools of Boston College, Duke, and Wake Forest felt the need to note their roles in their communities, too. Perhaps Duke needs to consider its positioning more because it was recently ranked as having America's third worst "town-gown relations," or the relationship between a university and its local community (Town-gown relations are strained, 2007). As a whole, universities should become vibrant parts of their communities, but that is especially true for those that trumpet their involvement.

Only eight of the 12 athletics departments emphasized athletic achievement in their mission statements. Among the schools that did not position themselves as focusing on athletic achievement, North Carolina was tops in the ACC in overall athletic success (third nationally), Virginia was third in the ACC (13th nationally), and Wake Forest was fourth in the ACC (23rd nationally) (U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup Division I Final Standings, 2007). Clemson, which laid claim most vigorously to athletic achievement, was ranked fifth in the ACC and 36th in national success. This finding leads to the question of whether universities that do not predicate their athletics departments' success upon athletic achievement can be justified in firing coaches who do not win. At North Carolina, football coach John Bunting was fired after a 3-9 season in 2006, but he was well-known for his strong graduation rate and high standards for players' behavior (Tudor, 2006). It is a tough distinction to make. If schools focus too much on athletic success, they are accused of not helping develop their student athletes, and if they ignore athletic success, they can risk losing donors and fans.

In summary, the ACC athletics departments have clearly defined themes throughout their mission statements. The research question of what brand dimensions do college athletics departments present in their mission statements can be answered by listing the most promenent dimensions as development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement. It seems, however, that for the most part, the athletics departments have failed to clearly position their brands in relation to those dimensions. This chapter has discussed the guiding principles that the ACC athletics departments laid out for themselves as brand dimensions in their mission

40

statements, the following chapter will provide the results of how well the athletics

departments' communications are living up to those dimensions.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' online communications during the month of January 2008 as well as a discussion of those results. The athletics departments' online documents were collected, then assigned to one of the five dominant themes that emerged during the analysis of the 12 mission statements of the ACC schools. There were 1,198 documents posted during the month with Duke leading the way with 153, followed by North Carolina, North Carolina State, and Virginia Tech (see Table 3-Frequency of universities' online communications). The following sections discuss how the themes of development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement emerged throughout the athletics departments' online communications.

Development of student-athletes

In the athletics departments' online communications, the theme of development of student-athletes, which refers to the departments' commitment to academic and personal growth of student-athletes, occurred most frequently in relation to scholar-athlete award articles, player features, and player question and answer articles. Virginia, Clemson, Duke, and North Carolina featured the development of student-athletes theme the most, but no school had the theme in at least 10% of its documents.

Table 3 – Frequency of universities' online communications

University	Total documents	Average documents per day	Most documents on single day
Boston College	50	1.61	3
Clemson	115	3.71	8
Duke	153	4.94	9
Florida State	84	2.71	7
Georgia Tech	83	2.68	6
Maryland	84	2.71	6
Miami	59	1.90	5
North Carolina	147	4.74	8
N.C. State	125	4.03	11
Virginia	111	3.58	8
Virginia Tech	121	3.90	9
Wake Forest	66	2.13	6
Totals	**1,198**	**38.65**	**62**

Virginia, which posted 11 documents fitting the theme of development of student-athletes, had a unique way to display its players' growth; it regularly displayed Q&A articles with its athletes. For instance, a Q&A article with a Cavaliers men's basketball player focused on his family's academic background ("Q&A with Jerome Meyinsse," 2008):

> Question: Both of your parents are college professors at Southern University, so is it correct to assume academics were a priority in your family?
>
> [Jerome] Meyinsse: Yes, my parents stressed academics when I was very young. I had to keep my grades up so I could play basketball. If my grades slipped, I wouldn't be able to play basketball, so I always had to keep my grades up."

Another Virginia Q&A article was about a freshman wrestler and his experiences so far at the university ("On the mat with Chris Henrich," 2008):

Question: The team has been really successful so far. Is this what you envisioned when you decided to come to UVa?

[Chris] Henrich: It's been unbelievable. I still remember the first day I met Coach Garland when he came into my house to recruit me. He made all sorts of promises, and he's either met those or exceeded every one of them. It has been a great experience.

Other athletics departments touted their development of student-athletes by posting releases about team or individual academic accomplishments. Clemson noted that "Tommy Bowden's Tigers had a team GPA of 2.53 for the fall semester, the program's top in-season GPA in history. Overall, it was the third best semester for the program on record" ("Clemson football team," 2008). Duke, Florida State, and Virginia each posted articles after players on their women's soccer teams were named to NSCAA/adidas Scholar All-America teams. Duke junior Christie McDonald was lauded for "compiling a 3.48 grade-point-average as an English major" while the Seminoles honored senior Kirsten van de Ven and junior Katrin Schmidt as "Florida State University joined the University of Texas as the only two schools to place a pair of student-athletes on the national scholar first team" ("McDonald named," 2008; "Schmidt, van de Ven named," 2008).

Finally, several of the athletics departments offered a glimpse into the personal side of the development of student-athletes through player features. North Carolina State, for instance, posted a player feature on wrestler Joe Caramanica, who moved down a weight class in hopes of a better showing at the NCAA tournament (Peeler, 2008b):

[Coach Carter] Jordan believes Caramanica could have won the Southern Scuffle, where he lost by technical fall to No. 6 Manuel Rivera of Minnesota in the quarterfinals, had he managed his weight properly over a long holiday break.

44

"It's more difficult to make the weight and maintain it, but it is something I am getting better at," he said. "I was never really used to cutting weight before. I never cut much weight in high school at all. Now, I am finally as big and as strong as everybody I am wrestling. I am able to hold my own strengthwise [sic] and weight-wise."

North Carolina, meanwhile, posted a feature on men's basketball player Bobby Frasor, who had recently sustained a season-ending knee injury (Lucas, 2008):

"When you're watching the game, it isn't that hard because you're into it and it's fun," he says. "You can see things differently than when you're on the court, and you get a better sense for how the team is playing than when you're part of it. But the hardest part is after the game. Everyone is joking around, laughing, and talking about specific plays. I remember being part of that and now I really have nothing to say other than, 'Good job in the game.' "

This section described the athletics departments' communications that fit the theme of development of student-athletes. The following section will present an overview of the documents that emerged within the university advocate theme.

University advocate

Only six of the 12 ACC athletics departments posted a document related to their roles as university advocates during January 2008. As noted in the analysis of athletics departments' mission statements, the university advocate theme typically involved intentions to adhere to universities' ideals and help reach universities' goals. The majority of the communications pertaining to the theme involved a new staff hiring, and Duke had the most such documents as it completely overhauled its football staff. Other articles that fit into the university advocate theme were focused on program valuations, campus renovations, and a coach's contract extension. Despite the variety of documents

fitting into the university advocate theme, there were few such documents overall with

Duke's six being the most.

Duke's university advocate releases typically took the form of new football coach

David Cutcliffe discussing the qualifications and attributes of the coaches he hired for his

staff. He was sure to mention the positive ways in which they would reflect upon the

university ("Cutcliffe adds seven," 2008):

> "As I look at this I always ask myself initially, 'Are these men that I
> would want dealing with my own children?' In this case, absolutely I
> would, is the answer. They come from all over; the National Football
> League and other outstanding institutions. They come to Duke University
> with great energy and a great attitude."

In another Duke release, the players had the chance to discuss their enthusiasm for the

leadership change (Roth, 2008):

> "When we got out of the meeting, a bunch of us were walking around
> waiting to come up here (to the press conference) and we were just
> pumped up," [Quarterback Zack] Asack said. "We wanted to get this thing
> going. He's a great motivator and we're all fortunate to have him on our
> team. The players who were at the meeting were very motivated and very
> excited right now. It's a very exciting time for Duke football right now."

Wake Forest also had hires to tout as positive for the university, one of which was former

Yale women's tennis captain Elizabeth "Biffy" Kaufman becoming an assistant coach

("Kaufman named," 2008). "I am very excited that Biffy will be joining the Wake family

this upcoming season," WFU Head Coach Chad Skorupka said. "Biffy was an

outstanding student-athlete at Yale and she will be a positive influence on our team."

Virginia Tech did not make any major hires during January, but it did announce a

contract extension for its men's basketball coach. Though no details of his salary were

mentioned, Virginia Tech stated that Seth Greenberg will represent the university through

the 2012-2013 season ("Virginia Tech extends," 2008): "It is an honor for me to represent Virginia Tech," Greenberg said. "I appreciate the confidence that the University has shown in the success that we have been able to establish and in the future and direction of our program."

Maryland and North Carolina did not announce any hires or contract extensions, but they both used their inclusion on a list by *Forbes* to display their roles as university advocates. Maryland issued a full release to note that its men's basketball team ranked "17th of 20 teams with a value of $13.1 million" on the magazine's index, which measured programs based on four beneficiaries: their university, athletic department, conference and local communities ("Maryland named," 2008). North Carolina, on the other hand, only offered a one-paragraph Weblog entry to announce its place atop the list, preferring to link to *Forbes* ("*Forbes*: UNC hoops," 2008). Interestingly, Duke and North Carolina State, which were the only other ACC schools on the *Forbes* list at fifth and 13th respectively, made no mention of the honors on their Web sites.

Finally, the Virginia Tech and North Carolina athletics departments documented their places on campus by updating publics about renovations to their baseball fields. Virginia Tech announced plans to add terrace seating to a hill beside its ballpark ("English Field facelift," 2008):

> As a part of Virginia Tech's ongoing commitment to the improvement of its athletics facilities, ground was broken in early January of 2008 on a series of renovations to English Field, the home of the Virginia Tech baseball team.
>
> "Anytime you see a tractor and dirt getting moved around, you know there is an investment," head baseball coach Pete Hughes said of the renovation plans. "And anytime there is an investment, that's progress, because you know your administration believes in your program and they believe there's a place for baseball at Virginia Tech."

47

North Carolina, meanwhile, just provided a paragraph-long release along with a photograph to announce that renovations were in "full swing" on Boshamer Stadium ("Boshamer construction update," 2008).

This section offered a summary of the athletics departments' documents that were identified as fitting the university advocate theme. The next section examines the types of documents that represented the fair play theme.

Fair play

The fair play theme rarely occurred in the schools' online communications, appearing in two releases from North Carolina and one release each from Boston College, Duke, and Virginia Tech. The theme of fair play in the ACC mission statements consisted of statements in which athletics departments pledged to live up to the rules and standards of their universities, their conference, and the NCAA in regards to on-field play and off-field administration. Interestingly, the two releases from North Carolina and the release from Virginia Tech involved negative news, in which the athletics departments could be seen as being on the wrong side of fair play. The releases from Boston College and Duke, on the other hand, involved the announcement of sportsmanship awards.

North Carolina's online communications that fit into the fair play theme dealt with the settlement of a sexual harassment lawsuit brought by a former women's soccer player. Melissa Jennings and Debbie Keller filed the suit against the university and head coach Anson Dorrance in 1998, seeking $12 million. The athletics department, which settled with Keller in 2004, settled with Jennings for $385,000. Neither North Carolina

nor Dorrance admitted fault in the release, and university leaders voiced their support for

the coach ("UNC settles lawsuit," 2008):

> "We have never believed that the case had any merit," says Chancellor
> James Moeser. "We've stood by Coach Dorrance since this case started
> and we stand by him now. Anson has for 25 plus years demonstrated a
> strong support of his student-athletes, is a great teacher, and has been a
> leader in advancing opportunities for women in intercollegiate athletics."

North Carolina followed the settlement release with a Q&A article with athletics director

Dick Baddour concerning it. The article addressed the details of the settlement, such as

all the money coming from the athletics department, as well as issues such as possible

discipline for Dorrance ("Q&A with Dick Baddour," 2008):

> Will Coach Dorrance be further disciplined by the University and/or the
> athletic department?
>
> The allegations that were made in 1998 were unprecedented. There were
> no allegations against him in the 20 years before the plaintiffs made their
> claims and there have been no allegations of a similar nature in the 10
> years since. Anson apologized for some comments he made in jest, and
> was reprimanded by the University back in 1998, but there was nothing he
> did that warranted this type of legal action. Anson has been a tremendous
> representative of the University of North Carolina for more than 30 years.

Virginia Tech's fair play release also dealt with a negative story, the two-game

suspension of men's basketball freshman Jeff Allen for making contact with an official.

The release included comments from Virginia Tech coach Greenberg as well as this

statement from Allen ("Men's basketball responds," 2008):

> "I would like to apologize to Mr. [Zelton] Steed [the referee], The ACC,
> my teammates, coaches and the Hokie Nation for my actions last Saturday
> in our game versus Georgia Tech. I made a terrible mistake and take full
> responsibility. In the heat of the moment, I let my emotions get the best of
> me. I understand my inappropriate behavior has consequences. This
> isolated incident is not reflective of who I am. I can assure you it will
> never happen again."

Unlike the previous negative news, Boston College and Duke both posted fair play releases when their teams were recipients of ACC Fall Sportsmanship Awards. Boston College noted that it led the way in garnering the prizes ("Three Boston College teams," 2008):

> "Three Boston College teams – field hockey, football and volleyball – received [awards], the most by any school in the conference … The sportsmanship awards are received by teams who [sic] have conducted themselves with a high degree of character and good sportsmanship. They are determined by a vote of the league's players and coaches."

Duke, meanwhile, noted that it won the sportsmanship award for women's soccer for the second consecutive year ("ACC announces," 2008). Miami, Georgia Tech, and Virginia Tech each won a sportsmanship award but failed to post a release about it on their Web sites.

This section discussed the few documents during the month of January 2008 that fit the theme of fair play. The following chapter examines documents that exhibited the community leader theme.

Community leader

The community leader theme was the second-most common in the athletics departments' online communications. This theme refers to statements in which athletics departments describe their greater role in the community through direct service, through leadership, or by acting as force for unity. In online communications, it included documents on everything from alumni deaths to museum openings to athletes' community service to call-in radio shows. North Carolina led the way in terms of community leader documents, but every ACC school had multiple documents dealing with the theme.

One of the most-prevalent types of articles involving the community leader theme was the community service story. At Boston College, the fencing team won a food drive by gathering more than 1,000 pounds of food for needy families, then it donated the winnings to a charity for Iraqi children ("Fencing team sets bar," 2008). Florida State touted that alumnus Warrick Dunn, a former star football player, earned the inaugural Home Depot NFL Neighborhood MVP award for his long history of building homes for struggling families ("Former Seminole Warrick Dunn," 2008). Georgia Tech announced that its student-athletes collected more than 1,400 toys and $7,000 for the United States Marines' Toys for Tots program ("Tech athletes help," 2008). Maryland was one of several athletics departments to note its involvement with the Special Olympics as its women's basketball team coached up young players ("The Terrapin women's basketball team," 2008). And finally, the Wake Forest women's basketball team joined forces with the American Red Cross to offer free tickets to its game against North Carolina in exchange for a blood donation ("WBB hosts blood drive," 2008).

Athletics departments also showed their community involvement in less-traditional ways. Clemson, for example, extended a special offer to children who were members of the Tiger Cub Club and performed well in school: "If you had all A's [sic] on your most recent report card you can have your name flashed on the scoreboard during a men's and women's basketball game" ("Tiger Cub to recognize," 2008). North Carolina announced the opening of its Carolina Basketball Museum, which has free admission for the public (Walston, 2008):

> This is Carolina Basketball. It's "required reading" for any fan. The museum collection took nearly six years to put together (and it's still growing). The building took two years to erect. Carolina Basketball's 98 years are a tradition of excellence. Finally, there is a worthy shrine.

Duke also paid homage to its former greats and their place in the community, releasing an

article about the induction of former athletics director Tom Butters and football star Leo

Hart into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame ("Butters, Hart to be inducted," 2008):

> Now living in Durham, Butters says, "I've cared about North Carolina for
> a long time. I've grown very fond of the state. Going into the North
> Carolina Sports Hall of Fame is a wonderful, unexpected honor. It's
> always gratifying to be recognized by your peers."

Several schools posted releases related to auctions or banquets in the community

to benefit athletics programs or charities. Virginia Tech announced that it would host an

inaugural "Baseball Night in Blacksburg," a banquet and auction featuring baseball Hall

of Famer Cal Ripken Jr. and benefiting the Hokies' baseball program ("Cal Ripken to

headline," 2008):

> "What an honor it is to be able to welcome one of baseball's all-time
> greats to what we're sure will turn into a special and annual event," [coach
> Pete] Hughes said of Ripken's inclusion in the inaugural banquet. "Cal is
> truly an ambassador of the game, and we couldn't be more appreciative of
> him agreeing to come to campus to help Virginia Tech kick off the spring
> with a fresh start and celebrate the beginning of a new baseball season."

Likewise, Virginia announced that its baseball fundraising event featuring Red Sox

manager Terry Francona as a guest speaker, a barbeque dinner, and a silent auction was

sold out ("Step up to the plate is sold out," 2008).

Finally, one of the most-common community leader releases involved fundraising

for women's breast cancer research. North Carolina State women's basketball coach Kay

Yow, a breast cancer survivor, led the way for the school's Hoops for Hope event ("A

breast cancer awareness event," 2008):

> Hoops for Hope will be a basketball game to remember! Breast cancer
> survivors will be recognized at half-time and fans will be given a FREE t-
> shirt (while supplies last) to show their support for the survivors and

Coach Yow. Hoops for Hope will also feature a commemorative game program wrap and commemorative ticket, allowing fans to remember the day for years to come. There will also be a silent auction and concourse displays featuring free giveaways ... this is a game you don't want to miss.

Clemson and Virginia were two schools that joined North Carolina State in raising funds for breast cancer research through the national "Think Pink" campaign. Clemson, in addition to providing free admission to a women's basketball game against Duke to breast cancer survivors and their families, vowed to "donate a matching gift for each contribution, up to $5,000" to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation ("Clemson Lady Tigers," 2008).

This section described the numerous ways the athletics departments presented the community leader theme through their online communications. The next chapter describes the documents that fit the most-prevalent theme, athletic achievement.

Athletic achievement

The final dominant theme that emerged from the ACC mission statements, athletic achievement, referred to when athletics departments professed their intentions to win or at least compete and perform at a high level. While it was the least referenced of the five dominant themes in the mission statements, it was overwhelmingly the most prevalent among the ACC schools' online communications. Day in and day out, the releases dealt with athletic achievement in the forms of wins and losses. Releases involving pregame information, game stories, postgame wrap-ups, injuries, and other team-specific information all fit into the athletic achievement theme. It was the most cited theme for every athletics department as each school focused on athletic achievement in excess of 80% of the time.

Typical of the athletic achievement release concerning a win was the Wake Forest release after its women's basketball team blew out nonconference opponent Savannah State ("Wake Forest denies," 2008): "Wake Forest forced a season-high 29 turnovers and capitalized on the Savannah State slip-ups with a whopping 32 points off Lady Tiger possession losses. Junior Alex Tchangoue helped the Demon Deacon attack, tying her career-high five steals mark."

The schools posted releases concerning non-revenue sports victories too, but those communications tended to have fewer quotes and got right to the point. Such was the case for a Georgia Tech women's tennis release: "All four Yellow Jackets in attendance posted first-round singles wins, including [Whitney] McCray, who knocked off the tournament's No. 8 seed, 42nd-ranked Laila Abdala of Arizona State, 4-6, 6-0, 6-1" ("McCray leads No. 1 Tech," 2008).

The pervasiveness of positive articles was so great that even schools like North Carolina State, which got off to a poor start in men's basketball, found some athletic success to tout. The school posted file articles from its last national championship season, 25 years previous ("Back to '83," 2008):

> Following a Clemson turnover on a potential game-tying possession, [Ernie] Myers capped off his remarkable ACC debut by converting a conventional three-point play after he was fouled by Clemson freshman Glen McCants.
>
> "I just went out there and played the game," said the freshmen [sic], who entered the game with an 11-point scoring average. "Dereck (Whittenburg) and some of the other guys who have been through this before just told me not to worry. They said 'Just who [sic] what you've been doing all season.' So I did."

The athletics departments posted releases after losses too, but it often seemed as if they tried to minimize the damage. After falling in its ACC home opener in men's

basketball to league neophyte Virginia Tech, Maryland ran the headline "Terrapins fall

by the slimmest of margins" (AP, 2008a). When its women's basketball team was

decimated by more than 30 points at Duke, Florida State played up the strength of its

opponent in the lead ("FSU women's basketball," 2008):

> Scoring droughts can hurt a team, especially when you're taking on a top-
> 25 Atlantic Coast Conference team on their home court. The Florida State
> women's basketball team had two big dry spells in the first half and
> No. 12 Duke capitalized as it came away with the 70-38 victory.

But not all releases seemed to put a spin on things. Many schools relied on The

Associated Press to provide game stories, so they had to go with the AP lead even if it

involved a last-second loss to an archrival, as was the case for one Virginia release (AP,

2008b): "Deron Washington's driving layup lingered on the rim and finally fell through

at the buzzer of overtime Wednesday night, giving Virginia Tech its first victory in its

rival's home city since the 1967-68 season."

Many articles that were not based on a specific game nonetheless fulfilled the

criteria for the athletic achievement theme. Miami, for instance, posted a release to

announce that its "men's basketball team is back among the nation's elite, ranked No. 25

in the AP Top 25 Poll" ("Hurricanes return to Top 25," 2008). Duke posted an article

with accolades for its women's basketball team as it entered the ACC schedule (Barnes,

2008):

> Duke's accomplishments in the ACC are impressive: six regular season
> titles in the last seven years, five league tournament titles and three
> undefeated seasons, including last season's 14-0 mark. The Blue Devils
> are 93-7 in their last 100 league games. To put that in further perspective,
> Carolina is 76-24 and Maryland is just 51-49. Drawing a national
> comparison, UConn is also 93-7 and Tennessee is 95-5 in their [sic] last
> 100 conference contests.

And finally, Maryland provided an optimistic slant in its men's tennis season preview

release ("Terps men's tennis," 2008):

> The Maryland men's tennis team enters the 2008 season with a great deal
> of confidence following a national ranking last year, a successful fall
> season, and the addition of a group of talented newcomers. …

> "This could potentially be our best season in years," Coach Jim Laitta
> said. "We have a very talented team."

This section presented the types of online documents that the athletics

departments used to display the most common of the five dominant themes, athletic

achievement. The following section describes the difficulties in establishing lesser-used

themes in the documents.

Lesser-used themes

The lesser-used themes that emerged in the ACC mission statements – supporting

diversity, fiscal integrity, and the quest for excellence – were more difficult to isolate in

the athletics departments' online releases. Although diversity was obvious in many of the

releases, it was never the focal point. There were numerous articles about men's and

women's sports, and players of diverse racial, cultural, and national backgrounds were

featured. But to determine the diversity breakdown of the releases, the majority of which

did not feature photographs or biographical information for the athletes, it would have

required a different focus for this research. Similar to supporting diversity, fiscal integrity

was never the main point of a release. Numerous articles cited the ways in which funds

were being used by the athletics departments, but the overall focus of the releases were

on the results of the spending, not the spending itself. Finally, the ambiguous theme of

the quest for excellence could be considered to apply to athletic victories, but those

articles seemed to more clearly fit into the theme of athletic achievement.

Prevelance of themes

      The theme of athletic achievement by far and away constituted the highest percentage of use by the athletics departments in their online communications at nearly 86% (see Figure 3-Dominant themes in ACC online communications). Community leader was next, followed by development of student-athletes, university advocate, and fair play. Each athletics department overwhelmingly focused on athletic achievement. Only Wake Forest and North Carolina featured another theme at least 10% of the time, both presenting themselves as community leaders (see Figure 4-Themes in ACC online communications by university).

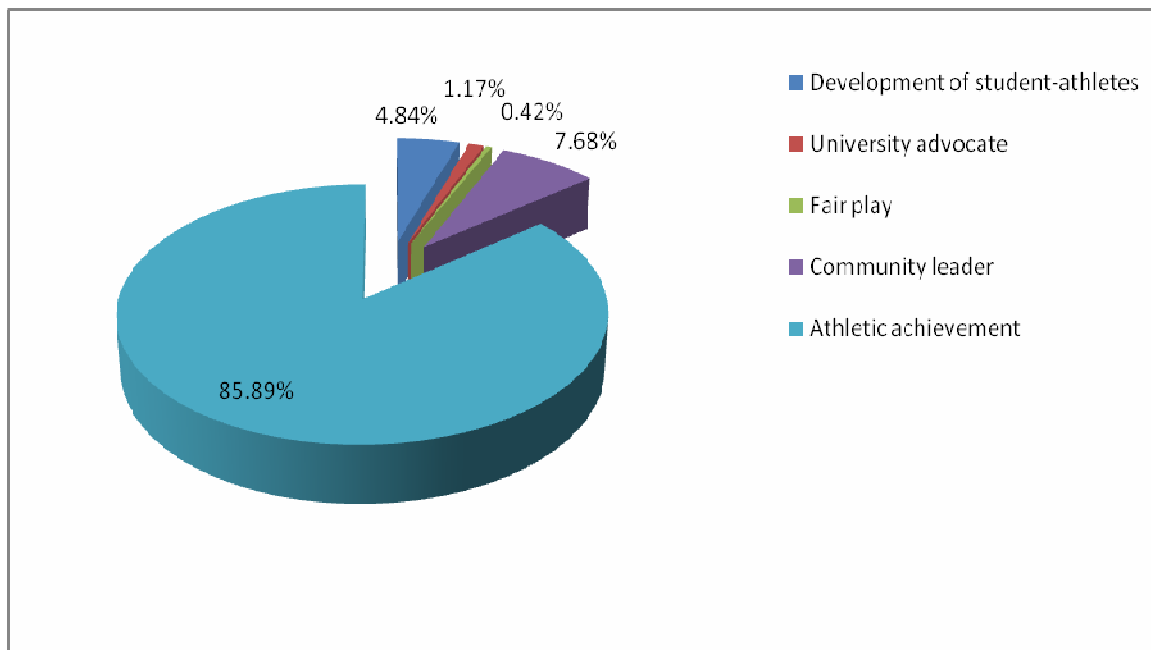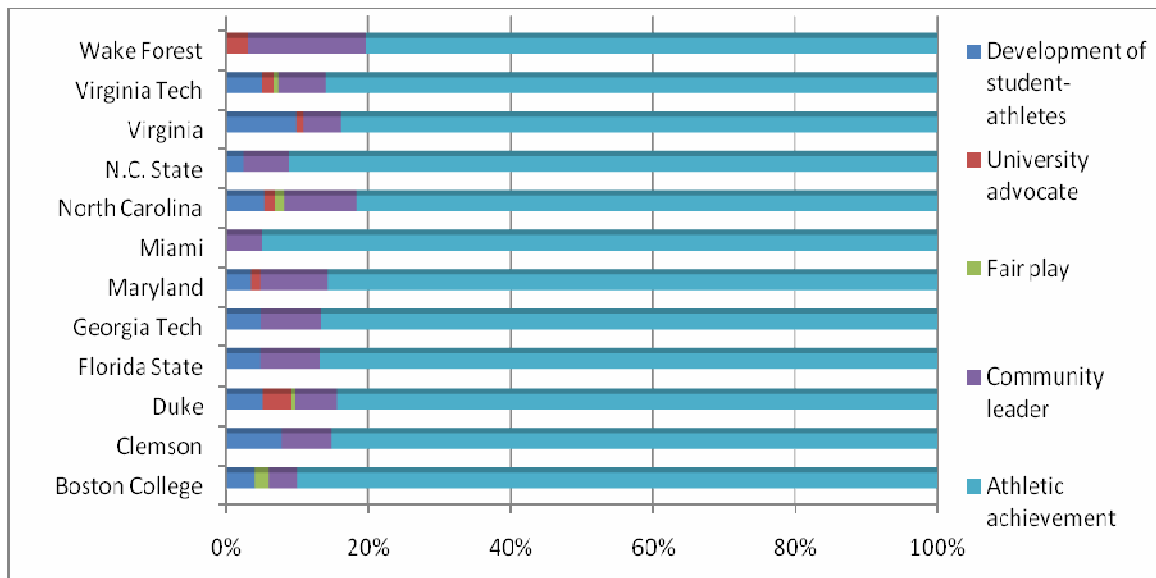**Figure 3 – Dominant themes in ACC online communications**

Figure 4 – Themes in ACC online communications by university

Duke led the way with 129 releases fitting the theme of athletic achievement while North Carolina had the most in the community leader theme (15 releases), Virginia led in development of student-athletes (11), Duke again led in university advocate (six), and North Carolina's two fair play releases were the most (see Table 4-Dominant theme frequencies in ACC online communications).

This section reported the quantitative results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' online communications. The following section will provide more of a discussion of the meaning behind those results.

Table 4 – Dominant theme frequencies in ACC online communications

University	Development of student-athletes	University advocate	Fair play	Community leader	Athletic achievement
Boston College	2	0	1	2	45
Clemson	9	0	0	8	98
Duke	8	6	1	9	129
Florida State	4	0	0	7	73
Georgia Tech	4	0	0	7	72
Maryland	3	1	0	8	72
Miami	0	0	0	3	56
North Carolina	8	2	2	15	120
N.C. State	3	0	0	8	114
Virginia	11	1	0	6	93
Virginia Tech	6	2	1	8	104
Wake Forest	0	2	0	11	53
Totals	**58**	**14**	**5**	**92**	**1,029**

Discussion of online communications analysis

This section will look closer at the results of the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' online communications, offering a greater context for the themes that emerged. By understanding the results of the analysis, the brand images that the athletics departments actually present may be better understood.

Through the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' online communications, it became obvious that they were most concerned with presenting day-to-day game information. The five dominant themes that developed from the athletics departments'

mission statements were applied to the online communications and the theme of athletic achievement was found to be present in nearly 86% of the releases. Such a disparity among the dominant themes in the mission statements and the online communications clearly presents the athletics departments as being mostly concerned with athletic achievement.

There could be multiple reasons why the athletics departments concentrated on the theme of athletic achievement so much. As discussed in the methods section, the ACC is the dominant collegiate athletics conference in the southeast United States. And with such credentials, there is great pressure on member institutions to compete at the highest level. Perhaps on their official Web sites, the ACC athletics departments choose to promote their athletic achievements in order to remain viable members of the league. Also, the fact that fans of a university's sports teams are the most likely audience for online communications may lead the athletics departments to post what the fans ostensibly want to see most – game results. And a final reason for the surplus of athletic achievement releases may be that many collegiate sports teams are not followed by the media with the regularity of football and basketball teams. Therefore, media members must often seek out game information from sports information departments. The most-effective way to make various media members aware of a game result is to post it on the athletic department's Web site.

The theme of community leader was second to athletic achievement in frequency of use, but it was much less prevalent, constituting less than 8% of the online communications. Like the theme of athletic achievement, community leader was pretty evenly dispersed among the schools. There seemed to be little differentiation between

public universities, even though North Carolina did have the most instances of the theme with 15, and private institutions. Wake Forest was second with 11 references and Duke was third with nine. The community leader articles that were posted presented the athletics departments and their student-athletes in a flattering light. The releases almost always dealt with student-athletes making a difference in the community through either charitable work or by connecting with fans. One possible explanation for why more such releases were not posted is that there was no more community service being performed, or at least not during the season. Needless to say, such releases could go a long way to setting the agenda that an athletics department is a positive force in the community.

The third most-common theme in the ACC athletics departments' online communications was the development of student-athletes. Virginia made greatest use of this theme, posting occasional player features and Q&A articles that offered a glimpse of what the student-athlete experience was like. Only Miami and Wake Forest did not post communications that fit into the theme of development of student-athletes. Although the reasons for the dearth of articles about the development of student-athletes are not clear, it is possible that the main culprit is simply a lack of time and resources in the athletics departments. Tracking down players for interviews and crafting articles about their experiences is certainly more time consuming than attending a game and just describing the action that unfolds. Plus, many athletics departments are likely stretched thin as their personnel cover myriad sports programs.

Finally, the themes of university advocate and fair play were rarely if ever present in the athletics departments' communications. Only Duke had a somewhat significant number of releases fitting one of the themes, with six university advocate articles. It is

difficult to understand why there would be so few releases fitting these themes. With their high visibility, athletics departments are often seen as representative of a university, so their role as university advocate is an important one. But in their releases, the ACC athletics departments rarely mentioned the connection to their universities. Only the new hire releases would mention coaches' attributes and how they reflected upon their universities. The fair play releases, meanwhile, were even less common and the majority of them dealt with negative news. It is interesting that North Carolina and Virginia Tech posted articles concerning a legal settlement and a suspension, but it is more significant that those were the only negative news articles posted by the athletics departments outside of games being lost. Without analyzing other media sources' information regarding the athletics departments, however, it is impossible to know if the schools underreported negative stories. There were positive fair play releases by Boston College and Duke regarding sportsmanship awards, but other schools that won such awards posted nothing. It is possible that the athletics departments did not consider being a good sport as exciting as wins or losses.

In summary, the ACC athletics departments did not present a diverse array of themes in their online communications. The research question of what brand dimensions do college athletics departments present in their online communication can be answered by noting that athletic achievement is the most prevalent and prominent. The other themes established in the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' mission statements – development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair play, and community leader – were not evident in significant numbers. The disconnection between the brand dimensions presented in the ACC athletics departments' online communications and their

mission statements is important to explore. This chapter has discussed the themes that the

ACC athletics departments presented as brand dimensions in their online

communications, the following chapter will provide a discussion of the differences

between those dimensions and the ones presented in the ACC mission statements.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION OF BRAND DIMENSIONS, CONCLUSIONS,

AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter will explore the brand images that emerged from analysis of the

ACC athletics departments' mission statements and how those brand images compare to

what the athletics departments presented in their online communications. Through such

an investigation, it can be determined if the athletics departments are living up to their

self-professed ideals. This chapter will also offer conclusions to this study and avenues

for future research.

According to Jones and Kahaner (1995), mission statements describe "the goals,

dreams, behaviors, culture and strategies of companies more than any other document"

(p. ix). As such, mission statements are a valuable tool for analyzing a company's or

organization's brand positioning or "the place the [brand] occupies in the consumers'

minds relative to competing products" (Armstrong & Kotler, 2007, p. 185). The ACC

athletics departments' mission statements were first coded by using Aaker's (1997) five

dimensions of brand personality, which have been applied to numerous corporate

settings. The dimensions did not clearly relate to athletics departments, though, and open

coding was performed to find unique themes. In the analysis of the ACC athletics

departments' mission statements, the dominant themes that emerged, in order of

frequency of use, were the development of student-athletes, university advocate, fair

play, community leader, and athletic achievement. The five dominant themes were

applied to the analysis of the ACC athletics departments' online communications during the month of January 2008, and the frequencies of use differed greatly from the themes' use in the mission statements. Athletic achievement was overwhelmingly the most-common theme, followed by community leader, development of student-athletes, university advocate, and fair play. It is important to examine the differences between the themes in the mission statements and the online communications because the athletics departments are essentially corporations now and "gaps between the visionary statements on the corporate [Web site] and the content of product advertisement will cause confusion over the corporate image" (Chun, 2004, p. 3).

The theme of development of student-athletes was the most prevalent of all the dominant themes in the ACC athletics departments' mission statements, constituting 33% of the themes in those documents. In the athletics departments' online communications, though, development of student-athletes was the overriding theme in fewer than 5% of the releases. Such a disparity is troubling. In the mission statements, the athletics departments profess their goals of producing well-rounded young adults who perform equally strong on the field and in the classroom. The online communications fail to show that dedication. The examples of athletics departments posting releases related to the development of student-athletes, such as Virginia's Q&A articles and various schools' releases honoring scholar-athletes, were few and far between. In the end, it is highly unlikely that even the most-dedicated visitor to the athletics departments' Web sites would believe that they are committed to the development of student-athletes.

The second-most-frequently used theme in the ACC athletics departments' mission statements was concerning their roles as university advocates (21%). Again, the

theme rarely appeared in the athletics departments' online communications, constituting

just more than 1% of the releases. The brand image presented in the mission statements

was that the athletics departments are extensions of their universities and must behave

accordingly. In the online communications, though, the only times that image was

presented was when new athletics department staff members were hired. To many people

across the country and around the world, the only information they receive about a

university is based upon its athletics programs' success or failure. With intercollegiate

sports providing such a public forum for dispersing positive information about a

university's purpose, it seems the athletics departments are missing an opportunity.

The third-most-regularly established theme in the athletics departments' mission

statements was fair play (19%). In the athletics departments' online communications,

though, the theme appeared most dominant in less than 1% of the releases. In the mission

statements, the theme was typically used by athletics departments to discuss their

intentions to be honest and upright citizens, competing in accordance to the bylaws of

their universities, the ACC, and the NCAA. The online communications dealt with either

teams that had earned honors for their good sportsmanship or with players and coaches

who did not live up to the established rules. The discrepancy between the mission

statements and the online communications in this case is easier to understand than with

other themes. An established maxim in sports is that playing by the rules is less likely to

be noticed than breaking them. Outside of a few annual awards, there is little history of

athletes who exhibit upstanding sportsmanship being recognized. Those who break the

rules, however, are subject to immediate public punishment. Until more programs are put

in place in college athletics to laud good sportsmanship, it is unlikely that the theme of fair play will be featured more regularly in communications.

Community leader was the fourth-most-recurring theme in the athletics departments' mission statements at 15%, yet it was present in just less than 8% of their online communications. Although community leader emerged nearly twice as often in the mission statements as it did in the online communications, that difference represented the closest any theme came to being used equally in each instance. The ways in which the theme emerged in the mission statements and online communications were similar. In the mission statements, the theme typically referred to athletics departments' roles providing community togetherness as well as students-athletes and coaches working for good causes. The online communications regarding the theme of community leader were usually based upon the charitable work of the athletics departments and their student-athletes. The number of releases based upon this theme may have been limited most by the actual amount of charitable events or acts that took place. In order to better present the brand image of community leaders, athletics departments should consider more promotions and events designed to increase charitable and community involvement.

The least-referenced of the five dominant themes in the ACC athletics departments' mission statements was athletic achievement at 12%; however, it was the overriding theme in nearly 86% of the athletics departments' online communications. That variation shows an extreme disconnection between the brand images the athletics departments professed to have and what they displayed in their releases. The amount of online communications dedicated to athletic achievement was not a surprise, though. As intercollegiate athletics has evolved into a huge enterprise, athletics departments have

turned to what makes the most money. Successful teams bring in more donations, make more revenues off television rights and merchandise sales, and attract a greater number of applications to their universities (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Maher, 2007; McEvoy, 2006; Wieberg, 2006b). It makes sense that athletics departments would want to promote the brand image that they are successful on the field more than other themes. By doing so, however, they are not living up to their missions. In the end, it will be up to the athletics departments to decide what brand images they hope to present and tailor their communications to fit those images.

This section examined the differences in the brand images presented through the ACC athletics departments' mission statements and their online communications. The research question of how the brand dimensions presented in college athletics departments' online communications relate to the brand dimensions presented in college athletics departments' mission statements can be answered by saying not very much (see Figure 5-Dominant themes in mission statements and online communication).

Figure 5 – Dominant themes in mission statements and online communications
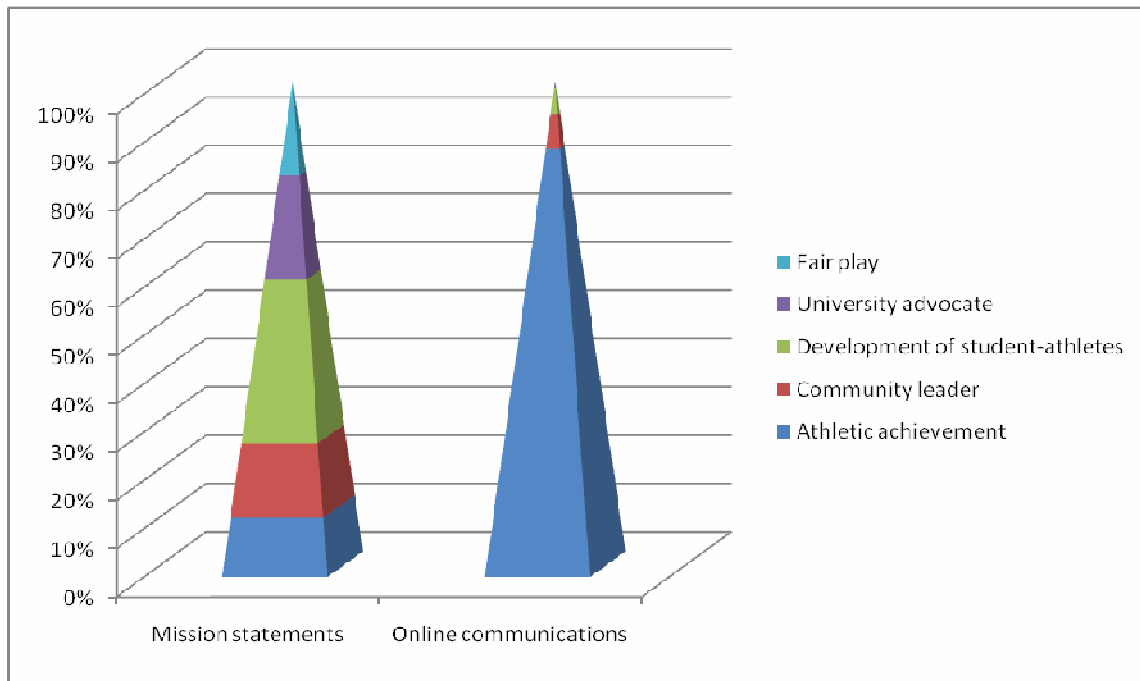
The mission statements focused mostly on the theme of development of student-athletes, followed by university advocate, fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement. The online communications, meanwhile, focused predominantly on athletic achievement. Through their mission statements, the athletics departments laid out a variety of important goals and constituants to address, but their online communications strayed from that path. The following section will offer conclusions to this research and provide direction for athletics departments as they attempt to develop distinct and powerful brand images.

Conclusions

This section will present an overview of the findings from this research and discuss their significance. The differences in the brand images presented through the ACC athletics departments' mission statements and their online communications will be evaluated and suggestions for presenting a consistent brand image will be noted.

Scholars in advertising, marketing, and public relations have known how important it is for corporations or organizations to possess strong brand identities and brand positioning for years (e.g., Aaker & Fornier, 1995). In recent years, college athletics departments have developed many of the attributes of major corporations. The rate of spending by Division I athletics departments has more than doubled the rate of university spending as some have developed annual budgets of more than $100 million (Sylwester, 2004; Weinbach, 2007). Successful athletics departments with well-defined brands can earn in excess of $100 million per year, but more often than not, Division I athletics departments lose money (AP, 2007; Weinbach, 2007). Despite their distinct brand characteristics on the playing surface and in the stands, the athletics departments in the ACC do not set themselves apart much in their mission statements or in their online communications, even though their financial success could depend upon it. They are clearly failing to meet Armstrong and Kotler's description of strong brands holding a distinct place in consumers' minds relative to competing products (1997).

Athletics departments must position themselves strongly if they are to allow their brands to occupy a distinct place in their publics' minds. In the ACC athletics departments' mission statements, there were five dominant themes: development of

student-athletes, university advocate, fair play, community leader, and athletic achievement. Despite the presence of these multiple themes across the mission statements, the individual athletics departments failed to distinguish themselves within the themes. With the exception of Boston College's mention of being a "Catholic and Jesuit university," the schools' mission statements were essentially interchangeable. The universities were even less discernible from one another when it came to the themes in their online communications. Each school overwhelmingly relied upon the theme of athletic achievement when presenting its messages.

The themes, though unique to athletics departments, did present some connections to research on corporate social responsibility. In Carroll's Pyramid of CSR, the four domains of philanthropic, ethical, legal, and economic CSR were outlined (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Philanthropic behavior among corporations is desired, ethical behavior is expected, while legal and economic behavior are required. Among the athletics departments, philanthropic behavior relates to the community leader theme, ethical and legal behavior relates to the fair play theme, while economic behavior clearly relates to the athletic achievement theme. Carroll's assertion that the economic domain of CSR is most fundamental can provide some explanation for the abundance of athletic achievement documents in the athletics departments' communications. As athletics departments evolve into de facto corporations, elements of CSR as well as branding will be important points of exploration.

This study focused primarily on the branding aspect of athletics departments' communications. In order to be most successful, corporations and organizations must form a distinctive brand position in order gain a competitive advantage over rivals and

earn a place in consumers' minds (Opoku, Abratt, & Pitt, 2006). The same is true for athletics departments. They must possess a strong brand position if they are to attract the best recruits, garner the most donations, earn the most revenues, and reflect best upon their universities.

There are many opportunities for the ACC athletics departments to stand out. Duke, for instance, should consider more educational branding in order to assert itself as the ACC leader in the classroom and attract the brightest recruits from around the nation. North Carolina, meanwhile, should emphasize its considerable athletic success in order to attract athletes of a high caliber as well as influence fans to support the university's mission as a leading state institution to make quality education available to all North Carolinians. Virginia Tech should consider pointing out how its football program has been a university advocate, raising the school's national exposure through on-field success. Boston College should stress how its sportsmanship awards prove that its teams live and play in accordance to the universities' religious ideals. And finally, North Carolina State should do more to highlight its efforts to support breast cancer research along with its role as a community leader. These are just a few of the possibilities for ACC athletics departments to assert themselves, but without clearly outlining brand positions that mesh in their mission statements and online communications, these athletics departments will not find any open space in a crowded field.

Even if they fail to establish more-distinguishing brand positions through their mission statements, it is important that the ACC athletics departments examine their online communications. In each of their mission statements, the schools professed duties to their student-athletes, their universities, and their communities. The athletics

departments' online communications, however, failed to show such dedication, focusing completely on athletic achievement. By concentrating only on wins and losses, the ACC athletics departments are failing their missions.

Future research

This study has been exploratory in nature and, as such, it opens to door for many avenues of future research. The lack of major research concerning college athletics departments' communications was a driving factor for this study, so future studies might build upon it or find their own unique directions.

Building upon this research might result in a greater understanding of athletics departments' brand positions or lack thereof. One possible path would be to conduct research with sports information directors and athletics department leaders to better understand what brand identities they are attempting to project and how they are trying to show them. Another possibility would be to seek out the audiences of the athletics departments' messages to learn the effectiveness of the brand positioning. This might extend organizational identity research, which compares the perceived identity that organizations believe they present, and their projected identity, which reflects how others perceive the organization (Illia et al., 2004). Surveys, interviews, and focus groups might be conducted with various audiences such as student-athletes, donors, fans, school administrators, and rival schools to determine how they view athletics departments.

Other topics concerning athletics departments' communications that were not addressed by this study might also be analyzed. Diversity within intercollegiate athletics is a significant topic, especially in light of Title IX legislation. Researchers could analyze

73

athletics departments' communications regarding diversity, determining the amount of messages and the significant themes present in them. Another interesting topic is the prevalence of negative news coverage in athletics departments' communications. Researchers could determine the level of openness and balance when it comes to news that may damage the athletics departments' reputations.

In the end, this study is by no means the final word on athletics departments' communications. It is, however, an important, early step and may provide a valuable basis for future research.

REFERENCES

A breast cancer awareness event: One heart, one mind … finding a cure together. (2008, January 9). Retrieved January 10, 2008, from Go Pack: http://www.gopack.com/.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *34*, 347-356.

Aaker, J., & Fournier, S. (1995). A brand as a character, a partner and a person: Three perspectives on the question of brand personality. *Advances in Consumer Research*, *22*, 391-395.

ACC announces 2007 Fall Sportsmanship Award recipients. (2008, January 10). Retrieved January 11, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

AP. (2006, August 26). *Longhorns hook record merchandising revenue.* Retrieved October 14, 2007, from ESPN.com: http://sports.espn.go.com/ncaa/news/story?id=2562097.

AP. (2007, September 10). Cashing in on the Web: Schools find new revenue source online. *USA Today*. Retrieved December 9, 2007, from usatoday.com: http://www.usatoday.com/sports/2007-09-10-1926043731_x.htm.

AP. (2008a, January 12). *Terrapins fall by the slimmest of margins.* Retrieved January 13, 2008, from UM Terps: http://umterps.cstv.com/.

AP. (2008b, January 16). *Cavaliers fall to Virginia Tech in overtime*. Retrieved January 17, 2008, from Virginia Sports: http://virginiasports.com/.

Armstrong, G., & Kotler, P. (2007). *Marketing: An introduction.* Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson.

Ashburn, E. (2007). To increase enrollment, community colleges add more sports. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *53*(44), 6.

Austin, J. R., Siguaw, J. A., & Mattila, A. S. (2003). A re-examination of the generalizability of the Aaker brand personality measurement framework. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *11*, 77-92.

Baade, R. A., & Sundberg, J. O. (1996). Fourth down and gold to go? Assessing the link between athletics and alumni giving. *Social Science Quarterly*, *77*, 789-803.

Barnes, S. (2008, January 11). Barnes: Duke women ready for new ACC season. *Blue Devil Weekly*. Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

BCS Championship Series. (n.d.). Retrieved November 10, 2007, from BCSfootball.org: http://www.bcsfootball.org.

Boshamer construction update. (2008, January 11). Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

Boston College 2007 Football Media Guide, All-Time Polls. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2007, from BCEagles.com: http://www.bceagles.com.

Butters, Hart to be inducted into N.C. Sports Hall of Fame. (2008, January 2). Retrieved January 3, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

Cal Ripken to headline 'Baseball Night in Blacksburg.' (2008, January 3). Retrieved January 4, 2008, from Hokie Sports: http://www.hokiesports.com/.

Carroll, A. (1979). A three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance. *Academy of Management Review*, *4*, 497-505.

Carroll, A. (2000). Ethical challenges for business in the new millenium: Corporate social responsibility and models of management morality. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *10*(1), 33-42.

Chun, R. (2004). The e-reputation mix: Building and protecting retailer brands online. *European Retail Diges* , *41*, 1-4.

Chun, R., & Davies, G. (2001). E-reputation: The role of mission and vision statements in positioning strategy. *Brand Management*, *8*, 315-333.

Clark, A. (2007, August 16). *UF No. 3 in collegiate licensing royalties.* Retrieved October 21, 2007, from Ledger.com: http://www.theledger.com/article/20070817/NEWS/708170400/1004.

Clemson football team sets record in the classroom. (2008, January 11). Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Clemson Tigers: http://clemsontigers.cstv.com/.

Clemson Lady Tigers to "Think Pink" as they shoot for the cure. (2008, January 30). Retrieved January 31, 2008, from Clemson Tigers: http://clemsontigers.cstv.com/.

College athletics. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2007, from Wikipedia.com: http://www.wikipedia.com.

Coyle, J. & Thorson, E. (2001). The effects of progressive levels of interactivity and vividness on web marketing sites. *Mass Communication Review Yearbook*, *30* (3), 65-77.

Cutcliffe adds seven to Duke gridiron coaching staff. (2008, January 4). Retrieved January 5, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

David, F., & David, F. (2003). It's time to redraft your mission statement. *The Journal of Business Strategy*, *24*(1), 11-15.

Doug Flutie. (n.d.). Retrieved October 19, 2007, from Wikipedia.com: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doug_Flutie.

English Field renovations underway. (2008, January 16). Retrieved January 17, 2008, from Hokie Sports: http://www.hokiesports.com/.

Esrock, S., & Leichty, G. (1998). Social responsibility and corporate web pages: Self-presentation of agenda-setting? *Public Relations Review*, *24*, 305-319.

Esrock, S. L., & Leichty, G. B. (1999). Corporate World Wide Web pages: Serving the news media and other publics. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *76*(3), 456-466.

Fairhurst, G., & Jordan, J. &. (1997). Why are we here? Managing the meaning of an organizational mission statement. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *25*(4), 243-264.

Fencing team sets bar for community action. (2008, January 23). Retrieved January 24, 2008, from Boston College Eagles: http://bceagles.cstv.com/.

Forbes: UNC hoops most valuable in USA. (2008, January 2). Retrieved January 3, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

Former Seminole Warrick Dunn selected as the inaugural Home Depot NFL neighborhood MVP. (2008, January 30). Retrieved January 31, 2008, from Seminoles.com: http://seminoles.cstv.com/.

Foss, S. K. (2004). *Rhetorical criticism: Exploration & practice.* Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

FSU women's basketball drops first ACC game of the year 70-38 at No. 12 Duke. (2008, January 11). Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Seminoles.com: http://seminoles.cstv.com/.

Gergen, M. M. (2000). Qualitative inquiry: Tensions and transformations. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 1025-1046). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Heisman balloting. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2007, from Heisman.com:
　　　http://www.heisman.com/balloting.

Heisman Trophy: The winning margin year by year. (n.d.). Retrieved October 22, 2007,
　　　from Heisman.com: http://www.heisman.com/handbook/winning-margin.html.

Hurricanes return to Top 25. (2008, January 7). Retrieved January 8, 2008, from
　　　Hurricane Sports: http://hurricanesports.cstv.com/.

Illia, L., Schmidt, E., Fischbach, I., Hangartner, R., & Rivola, R. (2004). An Issues
　　　Management Perspective on Corporate Identity: The Case of a Regulatory
　　　Agency. *Corporate Reputation Review 7*(1), 10-21.

Jones, P., & Kahaner, L. (1995). *Say it and live it: The 50 corporate mission statements
　　　that hit the mark.* New York: Doubleday.

JupiterResearch. (2006, June 26). *JupiterResearch finds that deployment of corporate
　　　Weblogs will double in 2006.* Retrieved December 7, 2007, from
　　　JupiterResearch.com:
　　　http://www.jupiterresearch.com/bin/item.pl/press:press_release/2006/id=06.06.26
　　　-corporate_weblogs.html/.

Kaufman named women's tennis assistant coach. (2008, January 7). Retrieved January 8,
　　　2008, from Wake Forest Sports: http://wakeforestsports.cstv.com/index-
　　　main.html.

Keys, P. (2007, December 4). Lamar University lays out football game plan. *The
　　　Beaumont Enterprise*, p. A1.

Kilgore, A. (2007, April 12). Charges dropped; Perceptions linger. *The Washington Post,*
　　　p. E01.

Kimelfeld, Y. & Watt, J. (2001). The pragmatic value of on-line transactional
　　　advertising: A predictor of purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing
　　　Communication*, *7* (3).

Levine, M. (1998). Consistency counts in sealing interactive brand identity. *Marketing
　　　News*, *32*(2), 8-8.

Lewis, S. (2003). Reputation and corporate responsibility. *Journal of Communication
　　　Management*, *7*(4), 356-364.

Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative communication research methods.*
　　　Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Lovaglia, M. J., & Lucas, J. W. (2005). High-visibility athletic programs and the prestige of public universities. *The Sports Journal*, *8*(1). Retrieved October 29, 2007, from thesportsjournal.com: http://www.thesportjournal.org/2005Journal/Vol8-No1/michael_lovaglia.asp.

Lucas, A. (2008, January 11). Lucas: Rehab process begins soon for Frasor. Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

Macias, W. (2003). A beginning look at the effects of interactivity, product involvement and Web experience on comprehension: Brand Web sites as interactive advertising. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, *25*(2), 31-44.

Maher, J. (2007, August 16). *Texas repeats as national champion in merchandising.* Retrieved October 21, 2007, from Statesman.com: http://www.statesman.com/sports/content/sports/stories/longhorns/08/16/0816royalties.html.

Major infractions cases. (2003, August 11). Retrieved November 11, 2007, from NCAA Legislative Database: https://goomer.ncaa.org/wdbctx/LSDBi/LSDBI.home.

Manheim, J., & Pratt, C. (1986). Communicating corporate social responsibility. *Public Relations Review*, *12*, 9-18.

Maryland named to Forbes' Top 20 list. (2008, January 3). Retrieved January 4, 2008, from UM Terps: http://umterps.cstv.com/.

McCray leads No. 1 Tech women on opening day of Freeman Memorial. (2008, January 11). Retrieved January 12, 2008, from Ramblin Wreck: http://ramblinwreck.cstv.com/.

McDonald named NSCAA/adidas Scholar All-America. (2008, January 5). Retrieved January 6, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

McEvoy, C. (2006). The impact of elite individual athletic performance on university applicants for admission in NCAA Division I-A football. *The Sports Journal*, 9(1). Retrieved October 20, 2007, from thesportsjournal.org: http://www.thesportjournal.org/2006Journal/Vol9-No1/McEvoy1.asp.

Men's basketball responds to Allen suspension. (2008, January 21). Retrieved January 22, 2008, from Hokie Sports: http://www.hokiesports.com/.

NCAA history. (n.d.). Retrieved October 16, 2007, from NCAA.org: http://www.ncaa.org/wps/portal/!ut/p/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKLN4j3CQXJgFjGpvqRqCKOcAFfj_zcVH1v_QD9gtzQiHJHRUUAc0tpTA!

!/delta/base64xml/L3dJdyEvUUd3QndNQSEvNElVRS82XzBfTFU!?CONTENT_URL=http://www.ncaa.org/about/history.html.

Novak, T. H. (2000). Measuring the customer experience in online environments: A structural modeling approach. *Marketing Science*, *19*(1), 22-42.

NSCA Collegiate Power Rankings. (2007). Retrieved November 10, 2007, from National Collegiate Scouting Association: http://www.ncsasports.org/college-recruiting%5Cpower-rankings%5C?tab=1&year=2007.

O'Keefe, B. (2007, October 19). *How Florida cashed in on college football.* Retrieved October 21, 2007, from Fortune.com: http://money.cnn.com/2007/10/18/news/companies/florida_gators.fortune/index.htm.

On the mat with Chris Henrich. (2008, January 30). Retrieved January 31, 2008, from Virginia Sports: http://virginiasports.com/.

Opoku, R., Abratt, R., & Pitt, L. (2006). Communicating brand personality: Are the websites doing the talking for the top South African Business Schools? *Journal of Brand Management*, 14, 20-39.

Peeler, T. (2008a, January 7). Back to '83: Myers, Bailey pour in 25 each against Tigers. Retrieved January 8, 2008, from Go Pack: http://www.gopack.com/.

Peeler, T. (2008b, January 17). Tim Peeler: Caramanica drops for greater success. Retrieved January 18, 2008, from Seminoles.com: http://seminoles.cstv.com/.

Pennington, B. (2002, May 9). More men's teams benched as colleges even field. *The New York Times*, p. A1.

Pennington, B. (2006, July 10). Small colleges, short of men, embrace football. *The New York Times*, p. A1.

Perline, M.M., & Stoldt, G.C. (2007). Competitive balance in men's and women's basketball: The cast of the Missouri Valley Conference. *The Sports Journal*, 10(4). Retrieved January 5, 2008, from thesportsjournal.com: http://www.thesportjournal.org/2007Journal/Vol10-No4/04Stoldt.asp.

Q&A with Dick Baddour. (2008, January 14). Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

Q&A with Jerome Meyinsse. (2008, January 16). Retrieved January 17, 2008, from Virginia Sports: http://virginiasports.com/.

Rarick, C., & Vitton, J. (1995). Mission statements make cents. *Journal of Business Strategy*, *16*(1), 11-13.

Roth, J. (2008, January 17). Roth: Cutcliffe's impact immediate. *Blue Devil Weekly*. Retrieved January 18, 2008, from Go Duke: http://goduke.com/.

Schmidt, van de Ven named Scholar All-Americans. (2008, January 9). Retrieved January 10, 2008, from Seminoles.com: http://seminoles.cstv.com/.

Schwartz, M.S., & Carroll, A.B. (2003). Corporate social responsibility: A three-domain approach. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 13*(4), 503-530.

Schwartz, P.J. (2008). The most valuable college basketball teams. *Forbes,* 2, January 2008, retrieved January 5, 2008, from forbes.com: http://www.forbes.com/sportsbusiness/2007/12/27/college-basketball-valuations-biz-sports_cz_js_0102basketball.html.

Sheth, J., & Sharma, A. (2005). International e-marketing: Opportunities and issues. *International Marketing Review*, *22*(6), 611-622.

Step up to the plate is sold out. (2008, January 10). Retrieved January 11, 2008, from Virginia Sports: http://virginiasports.com/.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Swales, J. & Rogers, P. (1995). Discourse and the projection of corporate culture: The mission statement. *Discourse & Society*, *6*, 223-242.

Sylwester, M. (2004, February 14). Athletic spending grows as academic funds dry up. *USA Today*, p. 1C.

Terps men's tennis looks for successful run in the ACC. (2008, January 11). Retrieved January 12, 2008, from UM Terps: http://umterps.cstv.com/.

Texas A&M Athletics. (2007, November 2). *VIP Connection press release.* Retrieved November 7, 2007, from Aggie Athletics: http://www.aggieathletics.com/features/.

The Terrapin women's basketball team spent time with the Special Olympics of Maryland. (2008, January 4). Retrieved January 5, 2008, from UM Terps: http://umterps.cstv.com/.

Thomsen, S. (1995). Using online databases for corporate issues management. *Public Relations Review*, *21*(2), 103-122.

Three Boston College teams earn ACC Fall Sportsmanship Awards. (2008, January 10). Retrieved January 11, 2008, from Boston College Eagles: http://bceagles.cstv.com/.

Tian, Y. (2005). *Being responsible to the society: A computer-assisted text analysis of the mission statements on the Fortune 100 companies' web sites*. Paper presented to the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New York, N.Y.

Tiger Cub to recognize straight "A" Tiger Cub Club members. (2008, January 18). Retrieved January 19, 2008, from Clemson Tigers: http://clemsontigers.cstv.com/.

Town-gown relations are strained. (2007). Retrieved November 11, 2007, from The Princeton Review: http://www.princetonreview.com/college/research/rankings/rankingDetails.asp?CategoryID=8&TopicID=60.

Tudor, C. (2006, October 23). Bunting just couldn't quite get it right. *The News & Observer*, p. C1.

UNC settles lawsuit with former player. (2008, January 14). Retrieved January 15, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

U.S. Department of Commerce (2005). *Computer and Internet use in the United States: 2003.* Retrieved October 18, 2007, from http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/p23-208.pdf.

U.S. Department of Education (2008). *Equity in athletics database.* Retrieved January 5, 2008, from http://ope.ed.gov/athletics/screen_detail.asp.

U.S. Sports Academy Directors' Cup Division I Final Standings. (2007, June 27). Retrieved November 10, 2007, from National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics: http://www.cstv.com/auto_pdf/p_hotos/s_chools/nacda/sports/directorscup/auto_pdf/finald1standings.

Vegosen, J. (2007, January 28). Starve football, feed athletics. *The New York Times*, Section 14NJ, p. 17.

Virginia Tech extends Greenberg's contract. (2008, January 22). Retrieved January 23, 2008, from Hokie Sports: http://www.hokiesports.com/.

Wake Forest denies Savannah State 85-41. (2008, January 24). Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Wake Forest Sports: http://wakeforestsports.cstv.com/index-main.html.

Walston, T. (2008, January 24). Carolina Basketball Museum sneak peak. Retrieved January 25, 2008, from Tar Heel Blue: http://tarheelblue.cstv.com/.

WBB hosts blood drive for Carolina tickets. (2008, January 28). Retrieved January 29, 2008, from Wake Forest Sports: http://wakeforestsports.cstv.com/index-main.html.

Weinbach, J. (2007, October 19). Inside college sports' biggest money machine. *The Wall Street Journal*, pp. W1, W4.

Weiss, D. (2007, December 19). Cheating scandal rocks Florida St. *The Daily News*, p. 63.

Wieberg, S. (2006a, March 21). When NCAA games are on the line, so are big bucks. *USA Today*, p. 1C.

Wieberg, S. (2006b, October 5). NCAA's tax status questioned; Congressman asks for response about exemption. *USA Today*, p. 3C.

Wolverton, B. (2007). Growth in sports gifts may mean fewer academic donations. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *54*(6), 1.

Yeomans, M. (2006). Blogs can offer a big advantage to brands - if they're honest. *New Media Age*, 15.