

Examining the Representation of Mission Statements within Admissions Marketing Materials: An Indiana University-Bloomington Study

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Admissions offices are charged with the responsibility of informing, attracting, and recruiting prospective students to higher education institutions. This is often carried out through traditional recruitment methods consisting of messages sent through marketing materials. The text and photographs included in these marketing materials communicate a culture that exists within the institution and invites prospective students to become a member of the community. These materials can also convey the values and mission of an institution. In order to identify the connection between an institution's values and their recruitment materials, this study examines the representation of mission statements within admissions marketing materials. Through an examination of the Indiana University-Bloomington Mission Statement, this study identifies five key themes: Research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom, and campus diversity, as well as two additional themes, athletics and campus beauty.

Colleges and universities use their mission statements to depict the responsibility, rationale, and vision of the institution. Artifacts, including mission statements, buildings, images, and other documents, contribute to the established culture and environment of a campus (Kuh, 1993), and inform individuals about the institutional environment. Campus culture can be reflected in the institution's history, symbols, and traditions, each of which can influence the information articulated within the institution's mission statement (Kuh, 1993).

In addition to a university's mission statement, marketing materials promote and educate individuals about an institution's values in order to attract and retain students who contribute to the campus environment. Symbols and documents, such as campus mission statements and admission marketing materials, preserve the culture and serve as a representation of the values and norms of the campus environment

(Hartshorne, 1943; Sporn, 1996). Mission statements for universities should articulate the espoused values in which its members believe. If the institutional values are stated in the mission statement, but are not articulated within the marketing materials, it reflects a lack of consistency in the message of the college or university. This lack of consistency, or gap between the espoused values and values displayed within the materials, could give prospective students a misleading image of the university's values.

Mission statements also provide the basis for an institution to present a consistent set of values and expectations for the respective college or university. Fugazzotto (2009) claims physical space and mission statements are directly linked and that "campus space makes mission, and thus structure and culture, more tangible" (p. 290). It is important to investigate if the values asserted by the mission statement are translated into institutional marketing materials because

institutions use mission statements as guiding documents for operations and campus aspirations (Kotler & Fox, 1985). When recruiting prospective students, providing an accurate representation of campus values, culture, and environment can help a student determine their interest in that particular institution (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008). If admissions marketing materials are displaying the institution's espoused values accurately, then prospective students will have a more realistic understanding of the campus community upon their enrollment and arrival.

In this article we explore the representation of mission statement themes in the admissions materials at Indiana University-Bloomington (IUB). To set the foundation for our study, literature addressing institutional culture, mission statements, view book and other admissions materials, and university branding are reviewed. From the literature, the research team addresses the importance of articulating the espoused values of an institution within the campus' admissions materials. Next, we outline the instrument created by the research team to assess themes displayed in the admissions materials. Key findings from the study are presented, followed by a discussion of the implications for IUB and future studies.

Literature Review

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture on a campus socializes new students to adapt to campus norms (Kuh, 1990). A campus norm is a group-held belief regarding how students should behave or interact during certain situations (Kuh, 1990). The enacted behaviors, norms, and values of a group or community within an

environment create the culture (Kuh, 1990). Strange and Banning (2001) define culture as an established pattern of basic behaviors and assumptions that a group develops and adopts. The culture is "reflected in traditions, stories, ceremonies, history, myths, heroines and heroes, interactions among members, policies and practices, symbols and mission, and philosophy" (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 100). Culture helps inform members of the community about the behaviors, traditions and other values of the institution.

Artifacts, perspectives, values, and assumptions comprise culture and are shared with new members. Their meanings and influence evolve to meet the needs of both the organization and the individual (Kuh & Hall, 1993). Because culture is complex and combines many elements of enacted behavior, campus leaders should have a general understanding of the culture within their environment. Campus leaders, such as presidents, deans, and high-level administrators, communicate the elements of the culture in order to inform the university community. It is important for these leaders to be aware of how culture shapes the environment (Tierney, 1988). One form of communication utilized by campus leaders is through artifacts, including the institution's mission statement. This communication can allow campus leaders to enact change, unify the community, and understand interactions between subgroups at the university.

At large institutions, subgroups develop and may have values that differ from the greater campus community (Hartshorne, 1943). These subgroups often remain supported by the campus because students who are "satisfied with college life are loyal to the institution,

attract new students...and participate in and perpetuate traditions” (Kuh, 1990, p. 56). Documents preserve the institutional and sub-group cultures while serving as representations to both insiders and outsiders of the values and norms of the campus (Hartshorne, 1943; Sporn, 1996). However, Sporn (1996) argues that university goals and standards are problematic and vulnerable to the environment. This creates difficulty for managing an institution-wide expectation, such as a campus mission statement, because of the numerous variables and subgroups that would need constant direction and alignment toward the specified objective.

The normative behavior of a campus community may not always be consistent with the espoused values articulated within a university’s mission statement. Enacted institutional values are demonstrated in the student newspaper or posters for student-run programs but might not align with the espoused values mentioned in the university’s mission statement. Examining the difference between espoused and projected values and how they are articulated within the campus environment can provide insight into the purpose and function of such artifacts as university admissions marketing materials and campus mission statements.

College and University Mission Statements

The use of university-created and established artifacts on campus, such as a university mission statement, is “central to the construction of meaning and the communication of understanding, and also [acts] as an impetus for influences and action” (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994). An artifact is a component of culture that has physical

presence on campus, which in some way adds to the culture of the institution (Strange & Banning, 2001). The message projected through an institution’s mission statement can create and establish a sense of community (Magolda, 2000). Institutional artifacts, including mission statements, can inform the individual about the environment, what to expect, and the behavioral norms (Magolda, 2000). In order for institutions to effectively communicate normative values, mission statements must consider factors of history, community, environment, resourcefulness, and proficiency (Kotler & Fox, 1985).

Mission statements are not solely grounded in the history of an institution but also in the current culture. The everyday activities and practices, which shape the environment, dictate the educational purpose (Edwards & Usher, 2003). According to Morpew and Hartley (2006), institutional missions include what is important for their benefactors (i.e., students, faculty, and/or alumni). Subsequently, mission statements reflect, rather than dictate, the campus environment. Fugazzotto (2009) believes that administrators, students, and faculty can enact behaviors that establish norms without thinking about the foundation of a mission statement. Campus space and articulated values within artifacts, such as a mission statement, can assist in making the institution’s espoused values more tangible, giving the values a physical presence on campus (Fugazzotto, 2009).

View Books and other Admissions Materials

Materials sent from a university to prospective students are also artifacts that represent the culture of that university. A prospective student’s choice

about where to attend college can be considered a life-changing decision (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008; Galotti & Kozberg, 1996), with many prospective students conducting significant amount of research before choosing an institution. Simoes and Soares (2010) argue, “studies assessing students’ information requirements and relevance have found that students tend to rely primarily on information sources developed by the university (e.g., brochures, leaflets, [and] university websites)” (p. 367). Therefore, the majority of colleges and universities spend a large portion of admissions and recruitment offices’ budgets creating and providing these sources (Fugazzotto, 2009). Admissions departments need to assist and inform prospective students about the specific institution and the full array of services offered (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008). Hoover (2008) noted, “on average, printed materials, such as view books and brochures, account for 24 percent of admissions budgets” (p. 367). Because many admissions departments spend a large portion of their budget on recruitment efforts, prospective students receive a variety of informational material. This material can range from a one-page pamphlet to a sleek institutional guidebook full of pictures, text, and an abundance of information. Such materials help ease the student through the decision-making process and entice the student to visit campus, complete an application, and eventually enroll as a new student (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008).

View books help students choose if a college or university is the place for them by allowing the students to gather information about many areas of the campus environment, vicariously experiencing the university before attending (Klassen, 2008). College and

university view books are advertising the institution to prospective students similarly to print ads, billboards, and television screens (Hartley & Morpew, 2008). View books are an instrumental promotional tool used by schools to depict the lifestyle prospective students can expect, as well as the institution’s values (Anctil, 2008, as cited in Pampaloni, 2010). Simoes and Soares (2010) state that, “consumers tend to search for more information when buying a service than when purchasing a tangible product” and the universities are providing the consumer (students and parents) with the information (p. 372). View books often contain general information about the university and do not include overly specific information about academic programs (Hartley & Morpew, 2008). Images that symbolize institutional values and priorities are depicted to help prospective students identify whether they will feel comfortable attending the university (Klassen, 2008).

Displaying and Promoting a Brand

Each institution of higher education has a unique set of characteristics that set it apart from other colleges and universities. The intentionality of these characteristics and features are part of each institution’s identity or brand (Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009; Bick, Jacobson, & Abratt, 2003). The brand of a university reveals the values, mission, and the way services are offered, allowing the targeted population to gain a working knowledge of that particular institution (Balmer, 1998; Bennett & Ali-Choudhury, 2009). There are several important aspects of the admissions materials that are sent to prospective students which display and promote the institution’s brand: images of

people with various visible identities, places or landmarks on campus, and the words used to describe the institution and its services. These depictions of the institution ideally are representative of the actual campus (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008). Good marketing and branding result from knowing one's institution, having a full understanding of the image and perception of the institution, and merging these effectively with marketing publications and activities (Klassen, 2008).

College and university administrators view marketing and advertising programs as a means to build a recognizable institutional brand (Newman, 2008). The effectiveness of the brand identity and how it is conveyed through the university's recruitment marketing materials impacts the admissions process from the student perspective (Newman, 2008). A university's branding strategy also can help or hinder the institution in its attempt to fulfill its' mission and vision statements (Cooper, 2009). Therefore, we pose the following question: Are IUB's admissions marketing materials accurately portraying an environment and culture, as described within the IUB Mission Statement, to prospective students?

Method

To understand the relationship between the espoused mission of the university as articulated in the IUB Mission Statement and the enacted purpose in the recruitment marketing materials, a framework of content analysis was used to analyze documents and to answer the research question. Content analysis allows researchers to use communication messages to

indirectly study human behavior (Berelson, 1952; Bowen, 2009; Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Thomas, 2006).

Commonly used for communication and consumer research, content analyses are "objective, systematic, and quantitative of the manifest content" (Kassarjian, 1977, p. 8). Manifest content does not rely on interpretation but rather the words, pictures, and images that are present in a document (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Conversely, latent content requires a researcher to make personal judgments to determine the underlying meaning of documents (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

For the purpose of this project, words and themes were used as the main units of measurement. Words are the basic unit for a content analysis, while themes are considered a larger unit of measurement and are most valuable in determining the values, beliefs, and attitudes of an organization (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kassarjian, 1977; Stemler, 2001). Kuh (1993) states that through the study of the values, beliefs, and attitudes of a setting, one can understand the environment. The IUB Mission Statement establishes desired environmental attributes and, through the admissions materials, the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the campus are represented publicly to prospective students. There are six questions to be addressed in content analysis:

1. Which data are analyzed?
2. How are they defined?
3. What is the population from which they are drawn?
4. What is the context relative to which the data are analyzed?
5. What are the boundaries of the analysis?

6. What is the target of the inferences? (Krippendorff, 1980, as cited in Stemler, 2001, p. 2)

These guiding questions were used to construct an original instrument (see Appendix A). The research team used this instrument to guide the content analysis of the IUB Mission Statement and admissions marketing materials. Both manifest and latent content were analyzed and the pictures and texts were placed into themes pulled from the IUB mission statement.

Indiana University-Bloomington Mission Statement Themes

By evaluating the content and merging subcategories into general thematic areas, the research team determined five key themes within the IUB Mission Statement. Each member of the research team coded the Mission Statement for thematic categories and those that were most pervasive and applicable to the purpose of the study were identified as: *research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom*, and *campus diversity*. These themes were stated within the IUB Mission Statement:

Bloomington is the flagship residential, doctoral-extensive campus of Indiana University. Its mission is to create, disseminate, preserve, and apply knowledge. It does so through its commitments to cutting-edge research, scholarship, arts, and creative activity; to challenging and inspired undergraduate, graduate, professional, and lifelong education; to culturally diverse and international educational programs and communities; to first-rate library and museum collections; to economic development in the state and region; and to meaningful experiences outside the classroom. The Bloomington campus is

committed to full diversity, academic freedom, and meeting the changing educational and research needs of the state, the nation, and the world (IUB, 2012).

According to Pampaloni (2010), and Klassen (2008), mission statements should inform the creation and distribution of university marketing materials. Thus, these five factors pulled from the Mission Statement should be articulated to prospective students to provide representation of the university environment and culture. For this reason, these five concepts should present themselves within the admissions marketing materials if the materials' purpose is to represent the university.

Sample

Hard copy marketing materials intended for traditional prospective students were collected from IUB's Office of Admissions in September 2012. These documents are distributed annually to over 700,000 prospective students and are also available in the Office of Admissions for daily use (K. Timney, personal communication, September 20, 2012). In this study, a twenty-page view book, scholarship brochure, and six postcards were analyzed. The view book contains images and text about IUB and is always mailed to prospective students with the scholarship brochure, which highlights funding opportunities available (K. Timney, personal communication, September 20, 2012). Postcards mailed to prospective students are covered with images and text on both sides, all themed "College Should Be Like This." Online or electronic media were not analyzed in the context of this study because these mediums are distributed to a wider population and are made available for public access, while the printed materials

are distributed directly to a targeted population of prospective students.

Instrument

Using an open coding process, the research team read the IUB Mission Statement (2012) and created an instrument (see Appendix A) for analyzing the admissions materials using the Mission Statement themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Thomas, 2006). The researchers adapted the framework from The National Archives and Records Administration (Education Staff, 2012a, 2012b) that contributed to the analytic consistency to identify both latent and manifest themes in the sample materials (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006).

Procedure

The research team designated four members to code the admissions documents. Pairs of two were established and assigned either (a) the postcards and scholarship brochure or (b) the view book. The division was determined for each group to have equitable amount to code. Each researcher independently coded the assigned document(s) using the instrument constructed from the IUB Mission Statement. An inductive process with open coding, using both latent and manifest processes, was used to determine whether the sample material had a direct or indirect relationship with the IUB Mission Statement (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Stemler, 2001; Thomas, 2006). This coding was conducted through the lens of a prospective student taking all information presented at face value. For example, if there were no identifying markers distinguishing a specific building as a museum or library, then the building

was not coded under the theme of *museums and libraries*. The pairs met to verify individual coding, confirming frequencies and emergent categories developed through the deductive process. Themes were then identified from the aggregate data: *research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom, and diversity*.

Coding

The worksheet, as discussed in the instrument section, is comprised of three sections: general information, latent information, and manifest information. Within general information, the type of material analyzed (view book, scholarship brochure, or postcard) and its format for distribution with personalized characteristics (i.e., name of recipient, personal address) is listed. The general information section also includes questions to determine the purpose of the document, intended audience, and a description of the material layout.

The worksheet's latent information section was created to determine and articulate the content of the document and its most prevalent themes. To determine the content of the document, the worksheet asked questions that included factors derived from the IUB Mission Statement. For example, one question states: "What does this document say about *research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom, and campus diversity?*" The section signifies the indirect relationship between the documents and the IUB Mission Statement.

The final section of the worksheet - manifest information - contains the coded themes from the IUB Mission Statement. This section asks the researchers

analyzing the document to include all text and images that fit within the decided themes. This documented information refers to a direct relationship with the IUB Mission Statement from the admissions materials. After individual coding, the research team members served as member checkers to ensure the validity and reliability of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Thomas, 2006). The research team coded 513 items. A total of 454 were directly related to the five established themes.

Analysis

The research team used the central coding document to analyze the themes and areas of the IUB Mission Statement that were dominant or least represented in the admissions materials. The aggregate data for the text and images for each theme of the Mission Statement were separated by view book and postcards/brochure to determine trends among the two groups of documents. Data from both groups of documents were then combined to create percentages reflecting the frequency of how often images or text depicting a theme from the Mission Statement was represented in the admissions materials. After initial analysis of the coded items representing the five themes in the Mission Statement, aggregate data from the emerging theme were added and percentages representing the frequency were calculated. This data set was then compared against the frequency percentages of the original five themes coded from the Mission Statement. The described analytic approach helped the researchers to illustrate the emphases the Office of Admissions places on certain campus experiences presented to prospective students.

Reliability and Validity

To check the validity of our findings, the latent and manifest data were compared in order to determine the similarities and differences between the gathered information. To ensure reliability, researchers identified their coding norms and definitions prior to analysis, compared their coding, and discussed any deviations in the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Stemler, 2001; Thomas, 2006). Data comparison checks were utilized to maintain consistency within the data collected. One member of each research pair completed the original analysis and the other member checked the validity of the data. The data comparison checking process also investigated the latent components and determined whether the interpreted meaning of the document analysis was accurate.

Findings

Coding the documents demonstrated that while all five themes (*research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom, and campus diversity*) were present, they were not equally represented. A total of 454 items were coded related to the five themes decided upon through the mission statement. However, upon document analysis, two additional sub-themes (*campus beauty* and *athletics*) increased the number of coded items to 513. The findings for each theme are discussed below.

Research

Research was the least represented theme of the Mission Statement in photos and text. Photographs of laboratory spaces, field

research, and the word “research” were all coded under the theme of *research*. Of the 454 items coded in the document, *research* manifested itself 14 times in five pictures and nine text items as represented in Table 1 (see Appendix B), accounting for only 3.1% of the themes coded. *Research* typically was depicted in a scientific lab with test tubes or equipment. In the text, the term “research” was used frequently in conjunction with “top-notch faculty.” The hard sciences (e.g., chemistry, biology, physics) were the primary areas in which *research* was displayed and discussed in the materials.

Academics

Photographs of classrooms, students studying, backpacks, studying materials, instructors, and text that included the word “academic” or text mentioned programs, schools, colleges, majors, and minors were all coded under the theme *academics*. Highly visible in both text and photos, *academics* were shown in 37.7% of the 454 items coded (see Appendix B). *Academics* are most prevalent in text compared to pictures, with 75% of the coded items related to *academics* being text. A large percentage of *academics* were found in the scholarships brochure, thus skewing the data for the postcard/brochure numbers presented in Table 1 (see Appendix B). Specifically focusing on the coded items in the postcard/brochure category, half of the photographs coded in the documents were present in the scholarship brochure. Additionally, of the 28 text items coded in the postcard/brochure, nine of the items were also present in the scholarship brochure.

Libraries and Museums

Libraries and Museums was the second least represented theme, occurring in only 3.5% (or 16) of the 454 items coded (see Appendix B). The words “museum” and “library” along with photographs of these spaces were included in the *libraries and museums* theme. Text was the most prevalent representation method in the view book, postcards, and brochure. Libraries were represented more than museum collections at the university. Although one of the main libraries on campus was pictured several times in the view book, there were no captions or context clues that would allow an outsider of the university to draw conclusions that it was a library, thus those images were not counted in this category.

Meaningful Experiences Outside the Classroom

Meaningful experiences outside the classroom encompassed multiple sub-codes including: student organizations, functional areas, fine art performances, entertainment (e.g., auditorium shows), volunteer opportunities, study abroad, internships, friends, students hanging out, and Residential Programs and Services. The sub-codes were created once documents were analyzed and several themes emerged. *Meaningful experiences outside of the classroom* were defined as out-of-class opportunities for students to learn and develop. *Meaningful experiences outside the classroom* accounted for 39.2% of the 454 items coded (see Appendix B). This theme was the second most represented aspect of the Mission Statement in the admissions material. These experiences were primarily represented through text. However, *meaningful experiences outside the classroom*, was the most represented

type of picture in the view book.

Campus Diversity

Cultural centers, human physical diversity, geographic diversity, and the word “diversity” were all codes under the theme *campus diversity*. *Campus diversity* was the third most represented theme of the Mission Statement present in 16.5% of the 454 items coded (see Appendix B). Examples of *campus diversity* from the post cards included visibly diverse student populations, inside and outside the classroom, and the various cultural centers located on campus. Comparatively, there were a larger number of photographs representing *campus diversity* when contrasted with the other themes.

Emergent Themes

Codes within the theme *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* included photos and text that portrayed athletics and associated traditions as sub-themes. Examples of these items encompassed photos of sporting events or text describing a campus tradition, such as the school’s fight song. *Athletics* comprised 7.5% of photos and 23.8% of text items for a total of 27.5% of items coded for *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* (see Appendix B). Overall, athletics represented 10.7% of photos and texts coded across all themes.

A total of 39 photos and 20 text items represented *campus beauty*. Examples of these items include photos of scenic areas on campus or text showcasing campus landmarks. It is possible that images of libraries and museums were included in this section if there were no identifying markers on the photos. *Campus beauty* represented

23.9% of all photos and 5.7% of all text, or a total of 11.5% of the data (see Appendix B). This significant percentage of data indicates *athletics* and *campus beauty* are valued components of the campus experience. The emergent themes are highlighted frequently in the admissions materials, indicating their importance to the campus and to the recruiting of prospective students.

Discussion: Interpretation of Findings

Initially, five themes in the admissions materials were coded based on the Mission Statement: *research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom*, and *campus diversity*. Upon reviewing the materials, two other themes, *athletics* and *campus beauty*, emerged. *Athletics* were added to the *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* theme. The research team felt this was appropriate because athletics have characteristics similar to other experiences that were categorized into this theme of an activity in which a student can partake. *Campus beauty* was broad enough to remain an independent theme. Athletics and the physical campus environment are values and norms established by the campus community and emerged in the content analysis. However, the two themes are not mentioned in the IUB Mission Statement. Interpreting the findings of the study will illustrate if IUB’s Office of Admission’s marketing materials accurately represent the values (the aforementioned five themes derived from the IUB Mission Statement) of the institution.

Limited Representation of Academics

While coding the documents for the theme of *academics*, the research

team searched for pictures or text of classrooms, people studying, professors, book bags, and other symbols related to the academic nature of the university. The scholarship brochure had the highest number of academic references. Referencing and displaying *academics* 43 times, the scholarship brochure contained nearly two times as many *academic* items as the other seven documents combined (see Appendix B). Hartley and Morphey (2008) found that view books do not typically include specific information about academic programs, explaining the lack of an academic focus in IUB's admissions materials.

Small Focus on Museums and Libraries

Libraries and museums are places or landmarks on campus that communicate the institutional brand (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008). Throughout the coding of these materials, unlabeled images of *libraries and museums* were not likely to be recognizable to prospective students unfamiliar with the facilities and therefore are identified in a mere 16 instances (3.1%) of the 454 codes that were found (see Appendix B). The coding for *libraries and museums* consisted of searching for text, pictures of *libraries and museums*, and places that could resemble either. This theme yielded the fewest items and therefore is perceived by the researchers to be the least valuable for appealing to prospective students.

Large Focus on School Spirit, Athletics, and Traditions

Athletics, defined as school spirit, traditions, or sporting events, are included in the *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* theme. This sub-theme comprises 16.2% of the *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* items.

Mention of student participation in sports is a common theme in many institutions' view books (Hartley & Morphey, 2008). While there is no mention of athletics in the IUB Mission Statement, athletics are a large part of the campus culture, which is not only reflective of the institution's traditions and history, but also explains why this theme is emergent in the admissions materials (Kuh, 1993). Astin (1968) found that campuses with a strong reputation would have high levels of school spirit and loyalty, and that cohesiveness of the environment would evolve over time into a more homogenous community.

The depictions of *athletics* are important because this information provides prospective students with insight into the behavioral norms of the institution (Magolda, 2000). The admissions materials mention traditions associated with athletics, which in turn entices prospective students to join in and continue participating in and promoting the traditions (Kuh, 1990). *Athletics* are perceived to appeal to prospective students and, therefore, are used as a recruiting tool in the materials distributed by admissions.

Emphasizing the Beautiful Campus

Campus beauty is an emergent theme observed after the first stage of coding. The theme was frequently highlighted throughout the admissions materials in aesthetically appealing images of campus coupled with the mention of winning awards or a text box describing the campus' attractiveness with a variety of adjectives. Universities are likely to incorporate a myriad of stereotypical images within view books and admissions materials including landscapes and aesthetic components of campus (Hartley & Morphey, 2008).

Campus beauty and identifiable images of the campus promote and display the institution's brand. Although images of campus played a large role in the admissions materials examined, there is no mention of greenery, landscapes, the arboretum, or other campus spaces within the IUB Mission Statement. The presence of *campus beauty* within the admissions marketing materials may be explained by the institution's historical tradition of including such images within their admission materials. Images of campus are important to include because they give realistic depictions to prospective students of the actual campus environment, thus providing students with more accurate information as to what they can expect to experience upon their arrival (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008).

Projected Values, Culture, and Environment

After analyzing the findings of the study, not all of the admissions marketing materials were direct reflections of the espoused values articulated within the IUB Mission Statement. Some themes were represented more than others. Within the materials, the themes of *academics* and *meaningful experiences outside the classroom* were represented more than the themes of *libraries and museums* and *research*. This finding suggests that the Mission Statement does not accurately represent the balance of values and norms of the institution and/or that the admissions marketing materials do not emphasize the espoused values proportionately to prospective students.

Limitations

Limitations and biases exist that may have influenced the study's identified results. First, it is necessary to acknowledge the potential for bias due to the researchers' backgrounds. All members of the research team are students in the Higher Education and Student Affairs program at IUB. Because of the researchers' awareness of the student experience and the administrative roles on campus, bias may exist. Their focus on student development provides a research lens that emphasizes the importance of connecting and communicating with students. This lens might have impacted the way in which the research team interpreted the images and text relating to a student's developmental experience.

Second, the information and categories developed in the content analysis are based on the interpretations of the researchers. While the role of the researchers is valid, it is important to note that this analysis is informed by campus experiences and backgrounds, the four researchers who conducted the analysis utilized the lens of a prospective student when looking at the documents. This is important because the interpretation of the data, its relevance, and importance to the campus community is derived from the research team and not the institution or admissions office.

In addition, the themes were not equally represented, which could suggest a value judgment on certain themes over others. IUB makes no statement as to the ranking or importance of the values articulated in the mission statement. Thus, one cannot expect the themes to be equally embodied throughout the institution and its' marketing materials.

Finally, because the study is focused on the IUB Mission Statement and admissions materials, the data is not generalizable to other campuses. However, the content analysis process can be replicated at any college or institution. Aware of our unique position at the university when examining the documents, the researchers believe the method and implications for the field outweigh the limitations and potential biases.

Implications

Further research is needed on how students perceive their campus environment as it relates to the institution's mission statement. Gathering more information about how students feel the institution emphasizes and values the five categories (*research, academics, libraries and museums, meaningful experiences outside the classroom, and campus diversity*), as well as the two emergent themes (*athletics and campus beauty*), would provide the student perspective that is missing from this study. Student perceptions would support or refute the results of this study by revealing whether or not the findings from the admissions materials are themes students are actually recognizing within their environment.

While this study is focused on a large, Midwestern, public research university, similar research could be performed on marketing materials from different post-secondary institutions across the nation. More questions have emerged on how marketing initiatives take campus mission or espoused values into consideration. How important are mission statements in admissions marketing materials? Are admissions departments more concerned about the

marketability and visual appeal of the institution or the accurate representation of the institution's mission statement? The literature suggests that it is important to capture attention and persuade students to apply for admission (McCreery, 2001). It is also important to portray the university's brand with an accurate representation of the campus (Armstrong & Lumsden, 2008).

Mission statements influence physical space and campus culture (Fugazzotto, 2009). Because of this influence, institutions would benefit from further research on how practitioners within admissions can specifically and holistically include factors of their mission statements into college marketing materials. The methodology of our study serves as a guide for institutions to analyze the reflection of their own mission statements in the materials distributed to prospective students. Nevertheless, more research is needed on how these components, such as *academics* or *research*, can be represented through images and/or text in the most accurate way.

Conclusion

Through the content analysis of admissions materials, this study measured the frequency of messages and images presented to prospective students. This study found that the admissions marketing materials reflected all five themes of IUB's Mission Statement, as well as two emergent themes that were featured prominently in the documents, which demonstrates their importance in the recruitment process. The themes were presented disproportionately when marketing to prospective students. This could suggest a lack of value or importance for incorporating these

themes over other themes that are not clearly stated in the IUB Mission Statement. The displayed activities and values in the admissions marketing materials are intended to attract prospective students to Indiana University and appeal to their interests.

Therefore, admissions offices seeking to accurately represent their university should take both the campus mission statement and the typical student experience into consideration when designing materials for distribution.

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Appendix A

Document Analysis Instrument

General document description

1. Document type – *Choose one below*
 - a. View book
 - b. Brochure
 - c. Postcard
2. Physical characteristics of the document – *Choose one below*
 - a. Personalized
 - b. University letterhead
3. What is the purpose of the document?
4. Creator of the document?
5. Describe layout of document (trifold, nine page booklet, etc.)?
6. What audience is this document created for?

Latent information

**For the following section please list page number or description of where information is located when referring to text/image within said document.*

1. What does this document say about research?
2. What does this document say about academics?
3. What does this document say about museums and libraries?
4. What does this document say about meaningful experiences outside the classroom?
5. What does this document say about campus diversity?
6. After reading the entire document; list the three most prevalent themes.

Manifest Information

**Record all the information relevant to the categories below found in the document. Information includes but is not limited to images, text, graphics, etc.*

1. Research
2. Academics
3. Museums and libraries
4. Meaningful experiences outside the classroom
5. Campus diversity

Appendix B

Data Tables

Table 1

Frequency of Mission Statement Key Concepts in Admissions Materials

	Photographs	Text	Totals Among Coded Mission Themes ¹		Totals Including Emerging Theme ²
Research					
View book	3	6	9	2.0%	1.8%
Postcard/Brochure	2	3	5	1.1%	1.0%
Subtotal	5	9	14	3.1%	2.7%
Academics					
View book	27	107	134	29.5%	26.1%
Postcard/Brochure	9	28	37	8.1%	7.2%
Subtotal	36	135	171	37.7%	33.3%
Libraries & Museums					
View book	2	9	11	2.4%	2.1%
Postcard/Brochure	2	3	5	1.1%	1.0%
Subtotal	4	12	16	3.5%	3.1%
Meaningful Experiences Outside the Classroom					
View book	33	69	102	22.5%	19.9%
Postcard/Brochure	15	61	76	16.7%	14.8%
Subtotal	48	130	178	39.2%	34.7%
Campus Diversity					
View book	18	32	50	11.0%	9.7%
Postcard/Brochure	13	12	25	5.5%	4.9%
Subtotal	31	44	75	16.5%	14.6%
Coded Mission Totals	124	330	454	100.0%	88.5%
Emergent Theme Through Coding					
Campus Beauty					
View book	32	16	48	N/A	9.4%
Postcard/Brochure	7	4	11	N/A	2.1%
Subtotal	39	20	59	N/A	11.5%
Overall Totals	163	350	513	N/A ³	100.0%

1 These percentages reflect the totals among the original 5 themes identified in the mission statement.

2 These percentages reflect the addition of campus beauty as an emerging theme. Athletics is not included as it is a subset of Meaningful Experiences Outside the Classroom.

3 Percentages could not be generated as campus beauty was not coded from the mission statement.

Table 2

Frequency of Sub-theme Athletic in Admissions Materials

	Photographs	Text	Total	Percentage of METOC ¹
Athletics - Subcode of Meaningful Experiences Outside the Classroom				
View book	10	18	28	27.5% ²
Postcard/Brochure	8	13	21	27.6%
Subtotal	18	31	49	27.5%

1 Meaningful Experiences Outside the Classroom

These percentages reflect the total amount within Meaningful Experiences

2 Outside the Classroom. Thus, 27.5% of the view books 102 coded items are athletic related.