

Promoting Business Schools: A Content Analysis of Business Schools Magazines

Jenny Yin Zhen
Emporia State University

Kevin R. Coulson
Emporia State University

Jun Yu
Emporia State University

Joyce X. Zhou
Emporia State University

Among the efforts made to attract students and supporters, many business schools use brochures or magazines to build and maintain relationships with alumni and other stakeholders, to attract new students, and to improve their overall visibility. These promotional materials have various contents, such as message from the dean, academic programs, student achievements, or faculty and staff news, among others. We perform a content analysis on the extent to which the content is utilized by AACSB-accredited business schools in the United States. The study provides an initial picture of self-promotion of business schools using school magazines. The result will increase our knowledge in the area of higher education marketing and help inform marketing professionals in business schools and colleges or universities in general.

INTRODUCTION

Business schools have many ways to communicate information to the public in order to build their brands, recruit new students, and make connections with alumni. There are studies about marketing for business schools, making connections through publications, communicating to perspective students through appropriate sources of information, recognizing the value of alumni, and the effectiveness of university marketing and retention. However, few studies about school magazines are available. Although school websites are one the most popular tools, magazines are also very important. They play an important role for business school publicity and brand building. So the present research about the business school magazines is very necessary. It will analyze the categories of those magazines and compare them among different schools. It is a detailed study about how business schools use magazines for promotion and what categories are most commonly used.

The current study will provide detailed information about the categories of different business school magazines. It may be helpful to business schools without magazines in the process of creating their

magazines, and for business schools with existing magazines to make improvements. The study will also contribute to the broad literature of higher education marketing.

The research objective is to analyze at least 36 business schools magazines across the United States. Tables will be used to display the analysis of magazine categories. Discussions will be made based on the analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are studies about the marketing of higher education institutions. Those studies consider students as consumers. As Wiese, Jordaan, and Heerden (2009) suggested, education can be classified as a service. Services can include a place, an idea, a person or an activity, with satisfaction or benefits offered for sale that are essentially intangible and do not result in the ownership of anything (Wiese et al. 2009). And there are various views about service. For example, services normally require more quality control, supplier credibility and adaptability (Kotler & Keller 2006). Some authors view services as acts, performances and experiences that create benefits for customers (Baron & Harris 1995; Brassington & Pettitt 2007; Lovelock & Wright 1999; McColl-Kennedy 2003). Wiese, Jordaan, and Heerden (2009) indicated higher education institutions can be classified as 'places' with benefits or satisfaction that offer services for sale. Therefore higher education institutions need to communicate with students by including institutional information in the sources that students consult or use. (Abaya 2004; Bodoh & Mighall 2002; Jarzabkowski & Wilson 2002; Melewar & Akel 2005).

Many media can be used in higher education institutional marketing. International studies report that marketing sources, such as advertisements, websites, email and brochures, are effective in reaching prospective students (Wiese et al. 2009). According to a press statement by the Primary Research Group (2007), more than 47 percent of American universities use website advertising to market their institutions. Earlier studies report that universities in the Los Angeles area mainly used recruiting catalogs and glossy alumni magazines to market their institutions (Warren 1994), whereas some universities made use of guidebooks, private counselors, and magazines to market theirs (McDonough 1994). The study conducted by Wiese, Jordaan and Van Heerden (2009) concluded that information directly from the institution, such as brochures, newsletters, websites, campus visits and open days are the best ways to disseminate information to prospective students. However, among those sources, the effectiveness of each is different. And it also differs across universities. One study (Hoyt & Brown 2003) reported that websites were the most important source of information for prospective students, while another study identified campus visits to be the most influential source of information (Seymour 2000). The least influential sources of information were listed as advertisements in magazines, newspapers, radio and television (Wiese et al. 2009).

In a study about branding business schools, it is pointed out that universities face the challenge to build a stronger brand for the sake of survival (Shbaro et al. 2010). For graduates, a well-known university brand is an asset to benefit their long-term career life; for investors, it is a guarantee that their investments in donations are justified effectively; for prospective students, it is a top criterion when they choose universities. Only with the creation and maintenance of a distinctive brand image, can universities have better chances to attract students, investors, faculty and staff (Moogan et al. 2001). The authors of the study generally classified business schools into two kinds: independent schools and those belonging to larger universities (Shbaro et al. 2010). They concluded that those business schools belonging to larger universities often benefit from the reputation of universities, but usually ignore creating their own school brands to be maximally competitive in the business schools market. On the other hand, the brands of small independent business schools are usually better built and maintained because there is no university brand and reputation they can rely upon. When it comes to organizational structure, small independent business schools are normally more flexible to changes, striving to create their own brand identities (Shbaro et al. 2010). The study also mentioned that due to the development of social media, the relative roles of message sender and receiver changed. Consumers are not passive information receivers any longer. They are provided with many opportunities to express their own opinions and real experiences

(Shbaro et al. 2010). The current knowledge gap in higher education branding urgently calls for research on communication influencing the brand development process from the perspective of future students, who are the consumers of higher education (Shbaro et al. 2010).

METHODOLOGY

The present study analyzes the contents of 36 business school magazines around the United States, They have similar media content. Some content categories span all magazines, such as message from the dean, college or alumni news and so on. Other magazines utilize school specific content such as columns on innovation, sports news, campus map and media contacts. They are displayed in different ways in business school magazines. Table 1 and Table 2 provide basic information of the study.

These business schools are classified into types across four major regions in the U.S. in the flowing table. Numbers in the table indicate the number of schools under each type.

**TABLE 1
REGIONS AND TYPES OF SCHOOLS**

Regions	Number of schools	Type of Schools			
		Public	Private	Research	Teaching
West	11	10	1	6	5
Northeast	8	1	7	4	4
Midwest	5	3	2	4	1
South	12	7	5	11	1
Total	36	21	15	25	11

All content categories appearing in the business schools' magazines in this study are listed in the following table. They are put into five main areas, which are message from the dean, news, college facts, profiles and other special categories. The number of schools which used these categories in their magazines and the percentage of them among all the schools are listed.

**TABLE 2
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS UNDER EACH CATEGORY**

Category	Number of Schools	Percentage
Message from the Dean	33	91.67%
News		
College News	32	88.89%
Faculty News	15	41.67%
Student News	12	33.33%
College Affairs	3	8.33%
Alumni News	22	61.11%
Sports News	4	11.11%
Academic News	1	2.78%
Administrative News	2	5.56%
College Facts		
Professional Perspective	2	5.56%
Innovation	4	11.11%
Research	11	30.56%

Global Outlook	13	36.11%
Community Outreach	5	13.89%
Profiles		
Faculty Profiles	9	25.00%
Alumni Profiles	3	8.33%
Special Columns		
Cover Story	6	16.67%
Business Reply Mail	10	27.78%
Q&A	4	11.11%
Business Network	1	2.78%
Class Year Notes	9	25.00%
My Favorite Professor	1	2.78%
Campus Map	1	2.78%
Media Contacts	1	2.78%
Facts of the College	11	30.56%
Year in Review	7	19.44%
Speakers and Visitors	3	8.33%
School Advisory Board and Leadership Team	6	16.67%
Contributions	4	11.11%
Vision	3	8.33%
Voice	1	2.78%
Honor Roll of Investors	2	5.56%

Bolded numbers represent the number and percentage of categories that are most popularly used in each area.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Based on the basic information generated, the study found out some popularly used categories. Then the study summarized these categories based on the region of school in table 3 and based on the type of school in table 4.

TABLE 3
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOLS IN EACH REGION UNDER MAIN CATEGORIES

Category	Region of School							
	West (11)		Northeast(8)		Midwest(5)		South(12)	
	Number of schools	Percentage						
Message from the Dean	9	81.82%	8	100%	5	100%	11	91.67%
News								
College News	10	90.91%	7	87.50%	5	100%	10	83.33%
Alumni News	6	54.55%	6	75.00%	3	60.00%	7	58.33%
Faculty News	4	36.36%	4	50.00%	2	40.00%	5	41.67%
Student News	5	45.45%	3	37.50%	1	20.00%	3	25.00%
College Facts								
Global Outlook	6	54.54%	3	37.50%	2	40.00%	2	16.67%
Facts of College	4	36.36%	2	25.00%	2	40.00%	3	25.00%
Research	4	36.36%	3	37.50%	0	0.00%	4	33.33%
Year in Review	2	18.18%	1	12.50%	1	20.00%	3	25.00%
Calendar of Events	4	36.36%	2	25.00%	0	0.00%	1	8.33%
School Advisory Board and Leadership Team	4	36.36%	0	0.00%	1	20.00%	1	8.33%
Profiles								
Faculty Profiles	4	36.36%	2	25.00%	1	20.00%	2	16.67%
Alumni Profiles	2	18.18%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	1	8.33%
Special Category								
Business Reply Mail	4	36.36%	2	25.00%	2	40.00%	2	16.67%
Class Year Notes	2	18.18%	1	12.50%	1	20.00%	5	41.67%
Cover Story	2	18.18%	1	12.50%	0	0.00%	3	25.00%
Q&A	1	9.09%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	3	25.00%

TABLE 4
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT TYPE OF SCHOOLS UNDER MAIN CATEGORIES

Category	Type of School							
	Public (21)		Private (15)		Research (25)		Teaching (11)	
	Number of schools	Percentage						
Message from the Dean	18	85.71%	15	100%	23	92.00%	10	90.91%
News								
College News	18	85.71%	15	100%	22	88.00%	10	90.91%
Alumni News	12	57.14%	10	66.67%	14	56.00%	8	72.73%
Faculty News	10	47.62%	5	33.33%	10	40.00%	5	45.45%
Student News	8	38.10%	4	26.67%	7	28.00%	5	45.45%
College Facts								
Global Outlook	6	28.57%	7	46.67%	8	32.00%	5	45.45%
Facts of College	5	23.81%	6	40.00%	6	24.00%	5	45.45%
Research	6	28.57%	5	33.33%	7	28.00%	4	36.36%
Year in Review	4	19.05%	3	20.00%	6	24.00%	1	9.09%
Calendar of Events	4	36.36%	3	25.00%	4	16.00%	3	27.27%
School Advisory Board and Leadership Team	3	14.29%	3	25.00%	4	16.00%	2	18.18%
Profiles								
Faculty Profiles	5	23.81%	4	26.67%	7	28.00%	2	18.18%
Alumni Profiles	3	14.29%	0	0.00%	3	12.00%	0	0.00%
Special Category								
Business Reply Mail	7	33.33%	3	25.00%	9	36.00%	1	9.09%
Class Year Notes	6	28.57%	3	25.00%	9	36.00%	0	0.00%
Cover Story	4	36.36%	2	13.33%	4	16.00%	2	18.18%
Q&A	3	14.29%	1	6.67%	3	12.00%	1	9.09%

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

According to table 2, the message from the dean is the most popular category. Schools used this category almost 92% of the time and it is usually put on the first page of the magazines. All the magazines have a lot of news. Most of them have general news around campus, which is the college news. Some of them have specified the news into different kinds. Their rankings are: alumni news, faculty news, student news, administrative news and academic news. In the facts of the college area, global issues, research, and statistics about the college are popular categories. In order to inform readers of the past and future events, most schools use year in review and calendar of events. Most of them have profiles for notable faculty, and some of them have alumni profiles. In addition, some business schools use their own categories. One of the most popular is the class notes. Some magazines include business reply mail, so they can get some feedback from the readers.

Additional analysis is made among these popular categories. As it is indicated in table 3, schools in west region have the most student news, global outlook, calendar of events, school advisory board and leadership team, faculty profiles, and alumni profiles. Schools in the northeast region have more alumni news, faculty news, and more information about research. Among schools in Midwest region, college news and facts of college are more popular. And they have more business reply mail. Special categories, such class notes, cover story, and Q&A are more popular among schools in south region.

The analysis in table 4 is based on different types of schools. As it is shown in table 4, teaching schools and research schools employ different content styles. College news and alumni news are more popular in private schools; faculty news and current student news are more popular in public schools. Private and teaching schools display more school facts in their magazines. Profiles of faculty and alumni are more popular in research schools' magazines. And public and research schools tend to have more special categories, such as business reply mail, class notes, and Q&A.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The sample of schools that were studied is small. More schools need to be analyzed in future research. The distribution of schools in each region studied differs. More schools in northeast and west regions are studied than in midwest and south. Analysis of the category indicates some popular categories. However, the effectiveness of each category needs to be determined.

In the future, some surveys on the effectiveness of each category could be conducted among students, faculties and alumni.

REFERENCES

- Abaya, E. (2004). Marketing Lakehead. *Newsletter*, 21, 3.
- Baron, S. & Harris, K. (1995). *Services Marketing*. London: MacMillan Press.
- Bodoh, J. & Mighall, R. (2002). Brand new image. *The Guardian*, 10.
- Brassington, F. & Pettitt, S. (2007). *Essentials of Marketing*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Hoyt, J.F. & Brown, A.B. (2003). Identifying college choice factors to successfully market your institution. *College and University*, 78, 3-5.
- Jarzabkowski, P. & Wilson, D. (2002). Top teams and strategy in a UK university. *Journal of Management Sciences*, 39, 355-382.
- Kotler, P. & Keller, K.L. (2006). *Marketing Management*. New Jersey, USA: Prentice Hall.
- Lovelock, C.H. & Wright, L. (1999). *Principles of Services Marketing and Management*. New Jersey, USA: Prentice-Hall.
- McColl-Kennedy, J.R. (2003). *Services Marketing a Managerial Approach*. Australia: John Wiley.
- McDonough, P.M. (1994). Buying and selling higher education: the social

construction. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 65, 427-467.

Melewar, T.C. & Akel, S. (2005). The role of corporate identity in the higher education sector. *Corporate Communication*, 10, 41-57.

Moogan, Y. J.; Baron, S. & Bainbridge, S. (2001). Timings and trade-offs in the marketing of higher education courses: a conjoint approach. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 19, 179-187.

Seymour, L. (2000). Giving the web the new college try: students online surf to sample life on campus. *The Washington Post*, 11.

Shbaro, K. Xu, M. & Liu, R. (2010). Branding business schools: Introducing “Students Decision Journey” as a guidance model. Master Thesis, Spring 2010.

Warren, E. (1994). Schools pull out the stops to lure business students. *Business Journal*, 18.

Wiese, M, Jordaan, Y. & Heerden, N.V. (2009). Communicating to prospective students through appropriate sources of information: a comparative study of selected public higher education institutions. *Communicare*, 28, 68-87.

**APPENDIX I
LIST OF SCHOOLS STUDIED**

School	Region	Type	Magazine Issued Date
Washington State University College of Business	West	Public Teaching	Fall 2012
Goizueta Business School, Emory University	South	Private Research	2011-2012
The Culverhouse College of Commerce, The University of Alabama	South	Public Research	2012
Carl H. Lindner Collage of Business, University of Cincinnati	West	Public Research	Fall 2012
The Binghamton University School of Management	Northeast	Public Research	Fall 2012
Michael G. Foster School of Business, University of Washington	West	Public Research	Fall 2012
Price College of Business, The University of Oklahoma	Midwest	Public Research	Fall 2012
George Herbert Walker School of Business & Technology, Webster University	Midwest	Private Teaching	2012

Gatton College of Business and Economics, University of Kentucky	South	Public Research	Fall 2012
The Simmons School of Management	Northeast	Private Teaching	Spring 2012
Hankamer School of Business, Baylor University	South	Private Research	2012
Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, Utah State University	West	Public Teaching	Fall 2012
Lundquist College of Business, University of Oregon	West	Public Research	Fall 2012
Mihaylo College of Business and Economics, California State University, Fullerton	West	Public Teaching	Fall 2012
University at Buffalo, The State University of New York	Northeast	Public Research	Fall 2012
The University of Texas at San Antonio	South	Public Research	2012
Jesse H. Jones Graduate School of Business, Rice University	South	Private Research	Fall 2012
Boston University School of Management	Northeast	Private Research	Summer 2012
College of Business, Loyola University New Orleans	South	Private Teaching	Fall 2012
The Naveen Jindal School of Management, the University of Texas at Dallas	South	Public Research	Fall 2012
Kenan-Flagler Business School, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	South	Public Research	Fall 2012
McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University	Northeast	Private Research	2012
Hofstra University	Northeast	Private Teaching	October 16, 2012

Stern Business School, New York University	Northeast	Private Research	Fall/winter 2012
Wake Forest University	Midwest	Public Research	Fall 2012
Hankamer School of Business, Baylor Business	South	Private Research	Fall 2012
Erivan K. Haub School of Business, Saint Joseph's University	Northeast	Private Teaching	Fall 2012
Villanova School of Business, Villanova University	Northeast	Private Teaching	Summer 2012
The Paul Merage School of Business	West	Public Research	2012-2013
Albers School of Business and Economics, Seattle University	West	Private Teaching	Summer 2012
The Haas School of Business, the University of California, Berkeley	West	Public Research	Summer 2012
Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota	Midwest	Public Research	2012
College of Business, California State University, Chico	West	Public Teaching	2012
Eller College of Management, The University of Arizona	West	Public Research	Fall 2012
Saint Louis University	Midwest	Private Research	Fall 2012
Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech University	South	Public Research	Fall 2012
The University of Oklahoma	South	Public Research	Fall 2012
McDonough School of Business, Georgetown University	South	Private	Fall 2012
Collins College of Business, The University of Tulsa	South	Private	Winter 2013

Daniels College of Business, University of Denver	West	Private	Fall 2012
Robert H. Smith School of Business, University of Maryland	South	Public	Spring 2013
The University of Southern Mississippi	South	Public	Winter 2013
Seidman College of Business, Grand Valley State University	Midwest	Public	Fall 2012
The George Washington University	South	Private	Spring 2013
Lubar School of Business, University of Wisconsin	Midwest	Public	Winter 2013

About the authors

Jenny Yin Zhen obtain her MBA from St John’s University, and is a marketing professional.

Kevin R. Coulson is a Professor of Marketing in the school of Business, Emporia State University. He received his PhD in marketing from University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He teaches and research in the areas of personal selling and sales management. His has published in the Journal of Internet Commerce, Journal of Promotion Management, The Journal for Advancement of Marketing Education, Administrative Issues Journal, The Journal of Legal, Ethical and Regulatory Issues, The Journal of Practical Global Business, Journal of Marketing Management, Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, and Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice.

Joyce Zhou is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the school of Business, Emporia State University. She acquired her PhD in marketing from Saint Louis University. Her teaching and research interests are in the areas of consumer behavior, advertising, and international marketing. Many of her papers have been published in Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Business Research, International Marketing Review, Journal of Small Business Management, Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of International Consumer Marketing, Journal of Internet Commerce, Journal of Promotion Management, and International Journal of Management Theory and Practices.

Jun Yu is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the School of Business, Emporia State University. He received a PhD degree in marketing from University of Texas at Dallas. He has previously taught at University of Texas at Dallas, University of Illinois at Chicago and University of Missouri at St Louis. His publications have appeared in Journal of Business Research, Journal of Small Business Management, Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of International Consumer Marketing, Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Journal of Internet Commerce, Journal of Management Theory and Practices.