

ABSTRACT

Selling a University: A Content Analysis of NCAA Division I Colleges' Featured YouTube Videos Using the Spirituality in Advertising Framework

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American universities are using social media outlets to reach audiences; moreover, the collegiate YouTube channels included in this study had more than 1.5 million subscribers as of August 31, 2018. Past studies have identified spiritual elements within commercial advertising (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016). Explicitly identifying aspects of spirituality using the Spirituality in Advertising Framework (SAF), this study analyzes NCAA Division I videos (n=115) featured on the institutions' official YouTube channels. A key finding was the presence of spiritual ideas in each NCAA conference, in public and private colleges, in Carnegie R1, R2 and R3 research institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). The SAF core idea most frequently identified in the study's video was the "integration with others" (n=51) or to join with others and be a part of something (Marmor-Lavie, Stout, & Lee, 2009, p.9). Nevertheless, represented at varying frequencies were all 16 SAF core ideas.

Selling a University: A content analysis of NCAA Division I Colleges Featured YouTube
Videos Using the Spirituality in Advertising Framework

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Journalism, Public Relations and New Media

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

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December 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would not have been possible, without the three Baylor faculty members serving on my thesis committee. Dr. Marlene Neill has poured hours into counseling me, provided source materials and edited countless versions of this study. Dr. Mia Moody-Ramirez provided insight that allowed me to broaden my outlook and approach to problem solving. She also offered gentle reminders to relax and enjoy the process. Dr. Stephanie Boddie's thoughtful insights and extensive background in religious and spiritual practices and higher education enriched this study and deepened my understanding.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the blessing Baylor University has bestowed upon me as an employee. Without the financial support and flexible work schedules provided by my employer, none of my graduate studies would have been possible. Dr. Jon Singletary, Dr. Holly Oxhandler, Nikki Wilmoth and Angela Bailey working alongside you at the Garland School of Social Work is a gift. Thank you for the opportunity and encouragement to pursue my studies as we work together to serve others. It is indeed a blessing to work for a university that believes and invests in its' employees. Because of each of you, I am forever changed. Thank you all for believing in me.

DEDICATION

To Tony, Holden and Collin George, the incredible men in my life. You have provided constant encouragement and endless patience. Thank you for eating way too many frozen pizzas and reminding me to take time to enjoy all of the blessings life has to offer. I love you and cannot wait to see what the future holds for each of us.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Spirituality may not be the first thing that comes to mind when someone thinks about online advertising or college recruitment videos; however, colleges and universities are seeking to reach their audiences with social media. Institutions of higher education are seeking to recruit potential students and effectively communicate their brand on social media platforms at increasingly higher rates (Weindling, 2017). In a weekly email to faculty and staff, Baylor University's president, Linda Livingstone introduced a new commercial designed for television and social media audiences as part of the "*Where Lights Shine Bright*" campaign. In her correspondence Livingstone explained that the 30 second spot was designed to "reflect the light of God in the world..." and to "...differentiate Baylor in the 'sea of sameness' reflected in most university commercials" (Livingstone, 2018). The private university did not hide its desire to connect with the audience on a deeper more spiritual level, but are other universities doing the same?

Over the past five years, Americans are preferring to define themselves as "spiritual but not religious" (Lipka & Gecewicz, 2017, p. 1). A survey with a random sample found that "the majority of Americans not affiliated with a religious tradition (62.9%) believe in God or some higher power" (Bader et al., 2006, p. 14). In a world that does not easily lend itself to face-to-face recruitment and deep in person spiritual conversations, universities recognize that today's potential college applicants are high

consumers of electronics and technology compared to past generations therefore institutions are communicating their brand online. This study adds to the growing body of work exploring spirituality in advertising, explicitly examining NCAA Division I colleges' recruitment videos posted on official YouTube channels. The Spirituality in Advertising Framework (SAF) presents 16 core ideas "that are characteristics of spiritual people and spiritual messages" that served as the study's theoretical framework (Lavie, Stout, & Lee, 2009, p. 8).

The connection between spirituality and higher education advertising, specifically web-based social media videos, was examined to determine how institutions are incorporating spiritual messaging into advertising efforts. Past research has established that advertising can draw consumer attention, impact consumer attitudes and behaviors, and influence consumer behavior and recall (Eighmey & Sar, 2007). Online video recruitment strategies have been utilized in other industries to strengthen an organization's brand and reach millennials. For example, analysis of the "Big Four," leading corporate accounting firms, found that the corporations successfully recruited college graduates into their organizations by incorporating video messaging within their recruiting websites (Campbell & Loyland, 2013). This study adds to the understanding of how NCAA Division 1 colleges' web-based video advertising efforts currently incorporate spirituality into messaging.

IBISWorld US (2017) reports that the higher education industry is estimated to generate \$463.4 billion annually in the United States. The anticipated 2.5 percent growth rate over the next five years only adds to the industry's importance (IBISWorld US, 2017). However, the market is changing. As a new generation of students enters college,

research indicates that their preferences, expectations, and needs are different from previous generations (Grow & Yang, 2018; Kozinsky, 2017; Nelson, James, Miles, Morrell, & Sledge, 2017; Seemiller & Grace, 2017). Of great interest is the preferred delivery method, especially web-based social and video media. Online content allows for the development of rich brand identities. Higher education recruitment strategies typically include outreach to parents/guardians as well as the student (Little & Price, 2013). Parents or guardians can represent the entire family and have potential to bring more than one student to an institution. Strikingly, there are generational differences between students, and their parent/guardians, and universities should be aware of the gaps as both parties play a role in the college selection process, although at varying degrees. As individuals further define their own religious and spiritual preferences, advertising approaches need to respond. Studies utilizing the SAF can explore various industries and the incorporation of spiritual and religious elements. Further exploration of spiritual concepts within higher education advertising is required, and this study seeks to expand the knowledge in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The definition of advertising has progressed over time to better fit the modern day consumer's needs and desires. Additional attention must be paid to the advertising practices and recruitment processes that have evolved over time as new technology has been introduced to the field. Nevertheless, technological advances are not the only factors evolving and shifting with time. A theoretical framework to identify and classify spiritual concepts has been provided by past research efforts, specifically the Spirituality in Advertising Framework (Marmor-Lavie et al., 2009). The ability to build and maintain strong branding is desired by companies and organizations worldwide, colleges and universities included. Differences in generational preferences and expressed values factor into the ever-changing messaging demands faced by colleges and universities.

Defining Advertising: an Evolutionary Process

Advertising practitioners and researchers have applied many definitions of advertising to their craft. In 1923, Daniel Starch defined advertising as “selling in print” (as cited in Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016). Next, television network's commercial advertising efforts resulted in a redefinition of the expression, and the term “mass media” was born (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016, p. 335). Dahlen and Rosengren (2016) argued that new media and advancements in technology have created a demand for a broader definition of advertising yet again. After surveying advertising professionals and scholars, the researchers discovered that the group shared “general agreement” and that

“(new) media and formats, (new) “consumer behaviors, and extended effects drive the evolution of advertising” (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016, p. 11). Simply put, the goal of advertising is to persuade (Rodgers & Thorson, 2012). In this case, the goal of the collegiate video content is to persuade students to apply and enroll at their institution. Professor of psychology at the University of Minnesota from 1895 to 1903, Harlow Gale, was the “first scholar to propose a conceptual definition of advertising” (Eighmey & Sar, 2007, p. 1). Eighmey and Sar (2007) regard Gale’s definition of advertising, “persuasion in the media,” as a staple in modern advertising curriculum and texts. The researchers explain that Gale’s research and experiments “took particular note of the intersection between advertising and personal experience” (Eighmey & Sar, 2007, p. 12). Agreeing with Dahlen and Rosengren’s argument for an adjusted definition of advertising, Huh (2016), states that advertising research and practices have extended “beyond traditional mass media advertising, agency work, effect outcomes and branding/marketing communication” (p.357). The shifting definition is a positive indicator for the field. Demand for growth and innovation is ever present. Objectives, media, and strategies may change or altogether disappear, and replacements appear, but the need will remain (Huh, 2016).

Advertising media have evolved alongside advancements in technology over the years. Conventionally, advertisements appeared with the rise of newspapers and print. Homes across the nation invited televisions into their living spaces, and commercial advertisements soon followed. Rodgers and Thorson (2012) explain in their textbook titled *Advertising Theory*, that online ads can be more “individualized” than other more traditional mass media. The customized approach to advertising and relative affordability

of video and social media can aid universities in reaching various target audiences. With the boom of the Internet and online applications, advertising strategies have evolved. Using role theory, a recent study points to the majority of social media employees in management positions “as a sign of the growing influence of social media” (Neill & Moody, 2015, p. 5). Further highlighting the importance of branding and social media, when interviewed one college president stated that, “the job of the modern president was to manage the brand” (Twitchell, 2005, p. 177).

Organizations are reaching audiences in nontraditional ways thanks to social media platforms. Creative messaging and technology allow even the smallest companies with limited resources to capture the attention of large audiences. Budget constraints alone no longer constitute a barrier of entry. An examination of Orabrush reveals an organization that stretched out of the traditional boundaries and landed its products on Walmart shelves across the nation (Neff, 2011). The company, which sells tongue cleaners, magnificently garnered attention by producing humorous videos and posting to YouTube, and advertising the links on Facebook. In total, Orabrush spent \$28 on the Facebook advertisement efforts and the videos were watched 39 million times (Neff, 2011). In addition to the fluctuating definition, practices of advertising and effectiveness of persuasion, experts have explored more specific areas of interest including religion. The presence and impact of religious symbols have been studied at length, focusing on the American consumers' response to religious advertising materials and messaging. A past investigation showed consumers a business card with a religious symbol and one that omitted the emblem. Participants that identified themselves as Christians reported “strong positive interactions,” including increased trust and preference towards the marketing that

included the religious symbol (Taylor, Halstead, & Haynes, 2010). The study of spirituality in advertising is not as expansive as its religious counterpart.

Spirituality in Advertising Framework

Understanding that there was a recognizable difference between religion (external) and spirituality (internal), Marmor Lavie et al. (2009) introduced the SAF. The researchers provide the following five-point operational definition of spirituality as an experience:

- 1.) broader than religion
- 2.) anchored in everyday life
- 3.) deals with our aspiration for highest human potential
- 4.) provides a path or tools to relate to suffering
- 5.) focuses on meaning (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016)

Based on the definition of spirituality, Table A.1 displays the 16-core ideas comprised in the SAF (Marmor-Lavie et al., 2009).

A qualitative experiment was conducted by the researchers to identify consumer insights on advertising containing spiritual messaging. The team found that the millennials “seek authenticity from within”(Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016, p. 181). As such, a “brand’s essence, especially if it carries a spiritual dimension, is expected to shine through the entire business process and dominate in the product itself, inside the company, in the advertising message, and in the field, after the campaign is gone” (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016, p. 181). Understanding and recognizing the importance of this finding is essential to any organization including spirituality within their advertising efforts. Brands may include spirituality in messaging unintentionally or unknowingly, yet the consumer’s expectation of the brand is still present.

Branding

The National Center for Education Statistics reports 4,627 degree-granting postsecondary Title IX institutions within the United States, of which 3,011 were four-year colleges (2018). College degrees come with tuition bills, and as with all markets postsecondary recruitment and enrollment is competitive. Universities must differentiate themselves from their competitors. Brand meaning “is the most powerful form of competitive differentiation” (MacInnis, Park, & W. Priester, 2009, p. xv). Brands can be infused with meanings “that are valuable to consumers not in solving their everyday problems, as products are traditionally thought of as doing, but in their more fundamental quest for an enduring and affirming sense of their place in this world” (Sen, Du, & Bhattacharya, 2009, p. 208). Strong consumer connections are possible through branding, so much that a brand could represent the consumer’s social identity (Reed II, Cohen, & Bhattacharjee, 2009). Fournier (2009) explained that brand relationships are developed and maintained with careful attention to the practical and emotional needs of the customer. “Brand relationship efforts that comprehensively recognize and fulfill the needs of real people – individually and collectively – are those that deliver results” (Fournier, 2009, p.6). Moreover, consumers of the university product or potential students are not shopping for a sole solution for their future earning potential, but seeking purpose and meaning. College brands incorporating core ideas of spirituality into their messaging have potential to reach their desired consumer and strengthen their brand.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

Psychologists have long studied persuasion techniques to understand consumer impact better and predict outcomes or desired actions. Cacioppo and Petty (1984)

presented the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), where they claimed the individual was not unaware of persuasive tactics being utilized, to counter past arguments made by other scientists. ELM explained that if a person felt the discussion was important their attitude could be impacted at a higher rate, or they could be persuaded at an increased rate to pay attention or act in a desired manner. The founding researchers explored the strong connection between positioning, attitude and consumer recall (Cacioppo & Petty, 1979). The ELM has been used to examine consumer behavior and persuasion techniques for decades since its inception. Today social media platforms like YouTube allow universities to position their videos in areas of highlighted positions. The ELM can be applied to social media positioning just as it can to print stories or other media. Researchers Zhou, Lu and Wang (2016) used ELM to explore the initial trust established by a consumer during their first visit to a website. The team found that the quality of an argument and the source credibility led to online initial trust with consumers (Zhou et al., 2016).

Higher Education Recruitment Strategies and Generational Preferences

In an international examination of success factors when marketing educational institutions, researchers found that it is crucial to recognize education as a marketable service (Mazzarol, Soutar, & Thein, 2001). Not until recent years have colleges and universities found themselves actively marketing their services to potential consumers. One team of experts stated, “as higher education institutions strive to develop distinctive identities, deeper understanding about topics such as brand identity, meaning, image, and reputation will enable brand owners to communicate more effectively with stakeholders including faculty, students, alumni, employers, and others” (Hemsley-Brown, Melewar,

Nguyen, & Wilson, 2016, p. 3019). Colleges and universities are finding themselves in an increasingly competitive, albeit growing market vying for students. Universities have increased the quality of facilities and services for students. The often underutilized and pricey facilities are referred to as “competitive amenities-things such as Olympic-quality gyms that few students use, Broadway-style theaters that are empty much of the time, personal trainers, glitzy student unions with movie theaters...” and more (Twitchell, 2005, p. 165). One institution employed celebrity chefs in the cafeteria, and others offer free cable movies in the residence halls, but incentives do not stop there; colleges have also provided recruits and students with free items ranging from ice cream to cell phones (Twitchell, 2005). With advancements in technology, demand for nontraditional class times and the introduction of online degree programs, traditional universities find themselves with new competition. Before the 1990s, accredited universities without brick and mortar campuses were unheard of (Craig, 2015). In summary, the market is more competitive, and universities cannot rely on their traditional advertising and recruitment strategies.

Comparatively, the universities’ target population also requires attention and reevaluation. Institutions across the nation are adopting new strategies and examining old efforts to attract new audiences, specifically first-generation college, international and minority students. Universities have identified young high school graduates as a key public for enrollment, but also understand that parents and guardians sometimes pay or assist with college expenses and as such play a role in the decision-making process of the student. Even if the student’s parent/guardian plays no part in the selection process, they can provide support and encouragement that feed into the university’s retention efforts.

Buy in from all parties is desired. “Creating advertising messages requires an idea that meets the needs of the target population. Thus, it is important to know who they are, what they want and what they need” (Denton, 2007, p. 35). Reaching Gen-Z or post-millennials and their parents, two different generations with differing needs presents, a unique challenge.

Past studies have established that university brands can create impressions in the mind of their audiences. These impressions are formed by what Davis and Dunn call “brand touchpoints” (as cited in Khanna, Jacob, & Yadav, 2014). Khanna et al. (2014) states that brand touchpoints occur in one of three “customer stages: (1) pre-purchase, (2) purchase (or usage) and (3) post-purchase” (p. 8). This study will focus primarily on pre-purchase brand touchpoints, namely the actions taken before a potential student enrolling in a university. After enrollment and becoming a student, the action or tactic would be classified as a purchase (or usage) touchpoint.

Generational Differences

Prospective students and their parent/guardians are from different generations. As such, they bring with them different lenses through which they view their environment and approach decision-making differently. Generation Z is now walking onto college campuses and are not only digital learners, but are career minded and want to be fully engaged learners (Kozinsky, 2017). Not only do they dress differently than their parents, but they also desire altered or different spirituality and advertising messages. Preferring to be challenged from within, this generation demands technology to be included and accessible; however, they want personal connection at the same time. It seems almost paradoxical. Engagement for the two populations is ideal, but preferences vary. A

qualitative study of 1,300 American students found different desires for learning, engagement and spirituality among Generation Z students when compared to previous generations (Seemiller & Grace, 2017). A student may say, “Engage me, but from a distance and let me choose when and where the interaction occurs, and I set the other boundaries.” Hitting this target audience is hard enough, but they are not the only audience. Universities cannot forget about a students’ spheres of influences, parents, friends and other supporters. Simultaneously advertising and recruiting to various populations across generations is a real demand facing colleges.

NCAA Division I Universities

The NCAA includes 1,102 (351 D1, 308 D2 and 443 D3) institutions of higher learning (“Our Three Divisions,” 2018). Within Division I, there are 131 colleges currently classified as Division I FBS, the highest ranking based on size and competition. Each academic institution is unique; nevertheless, there is one similarity across the group. All institutions need student enrollment to fulfill their missions. The question then arises around how each individual school reaches potential students on social media and if they utilize religious or spiritual content within their messages. To answer this question, a sample of NCAA Division I FBS colleges’ YouTube videos were analyzed utilizing the SAF. The first aim of the study was to determine if the examined colleges and universities are utilizing spiritual messaging in their online videos. The spiritual concept and frequency, if deployed, will be tracked for comparison purposes. Moreover, the second aim was to explore spiritual concepts and frequency used by the religiously-affiliated universities and their non-religiously-affiliated counterparts to determine if there was a significant difference between the groups.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: 1a) To what degree, if any, are NCAA Division I universities using spirituality in their web-based social and video media materials disseminated by YouTube? 1b) Which spiritual core ideas appear most frequently?

Research Question 2: Are there differences between NCAA Division I universities using spirituality in their featured YouTube videos based on their conference or other classifications?

- a) NCAA Conference
- b) Public compared to private institutions
- c) Official Carnegie research classification (R1, R2, R3, or Other)
- d) Designation of HSI, HBCU, or Tribal compared to universities with no designation

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Content analysis to identify themes has been used widely in advertising research to identify preferred best practices and examine topics ranging from statistical analysis in advertising research to sex role stereotypes and even image repair strategies for religious leaders (Fischer, 2012; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Yoo, Joo, Choi, Reid, & Kim, 2015). This study will analyze online videos posted on official NCAA Division 1 colleges' YouTube channels. Currently, there are 131 institutions within this classification, and 115 organizations have official university channels with a highlighted video on the main page. YouTube provides channels with the opportunity to feature a video on their page, but this is not a requirement. The highlighted preference shown by the university toward the featured video was used to select the content for this study. A total of 16 universities were excluded from the study for either not selecting a highlighted video on their page or not having a main YouTube channel designated for the university. One example of this is found within the Big 12 conference. Iowa State University has the highest undergraduate enrollment compared to the other institutions in their conference, but does not have a main YouTube channel. Instead this particular organization has many department and association channels; for this reason, this study excluded the university.

Next, a qualitative analysis was performed in order to provide insights on the spiritual concepts identified and the messages' interpretations. Two coders were used to identify which, if any, of the 16 spiritual core ideas were present. To ensure reliability,

both individuals coded 31 videos, and the results were discussed further defining the coding scheme. The coders found 96.7% agreement when coding for spirituality and the SAF Core Beliefs. Content analysis was chosen to provide a clear understanding of what digital media messages exist on college YouTube channels.

In addition to identifying the 16 spiritual core ideas from the SAF, transcripts of each video were used for a content analysis of the spoken words within each advertisement. NVivo 12 aided with content analysis and identification of word frequency. Basic background information on each university was recorded. For example, data collected includes: location, NCAA Division name, Carnegie research classification, whether or not the organization's classification is a private or public institution, and if the university is designated as a member of a Historically Black College University (HBCU), Tribal or Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Data analytics, made available by YouTube, were recorded on the video capture dates spanning between April 22, 2018, and August 31, 2018. This information includes the number of subscribers belonging to each channel, the number of videos uploaded to the channel, the feature video's title, the number of views the feature video has had, the published date of the video, and any user interactions made with the content.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings and Discussion

The YouTube channels included in the study have large audiences and a robust online presence with a total of 1,534,370 subscribers and an average of 12,275 subscribers per channel. Overall 131 universities were examined, but 12.21% (n=16) of the universities did not have a featured video indicating preference (see Figure B.1). In total, the 87.79% (n=115) highlighted videos, with and without spirituality, included in the study had accumulated 3,374,344 views as of August 31, 2018.

NCAA Division I YouTube Advertising with Spirituality

Research Question 1 asked, “To what degree, if any, are NCAA Division I universities using spirituality in their web-based social and video media materials disseminated by YouTube? 1b) “Which spiritual core ideas appear most frequently?” This study found spiritual messages to be present in 65.22% (n=75) of all featured YouTube videos featured (n=115). Table C.1 displays the inclusion rate of each SAF Core Idea by frequency and percentage.

SAF 7, Integration with Others was recorded in 79.69% (n=51) of the featured videos, more frequently than any other element of spirituality. Additionally, Self-Actualization, SAF 10, and the Action Component, SAF 1, were identified at high rates. Self-Actualization, featuring individuals realizing or achieving their potential was detected in 57.53% (n=42) videos and the Action Component for personal action was perceived in 49.35% (n=38) messages. SAF 3 and SAF 16, Suffering and Letting Go

respectively, were two SAF Core Ideas that were used the least in the university messages, although each appeared once in separate videos. Figure B.2 provides a visualization of the SAF frequencies charted.

Notably each of the 16 SAF Core Ideas were identified in at least one video. Of the videos that included spirituality, the majority incorporated more than one element into their message. For example, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill's video, *For All Kind: The Campaign for Carolina*, had nine SAF Core Beliefs reported. "Bound to an unconditional mission and devoted to every life!" is a small excerpt from the video's transcript and serves as an example of blending together the Action Component, SAF 1, with SAF 6, Unity of all Mankind. The narration is filled with spiritual messaging and the video footage displays individuals united in team sports, dance and other activities together in unison reinforcing the message of togetherness. Figure B.3 is a screenshot displaying the group dance appearing in the UNC Chapel Hill video.

NCAA Conferences

Research Question 2 inquired, "Are there differences between NCAA Division I universities using spirituality in their featured YouTube videos based on their conference or other classifications?" The study found that every NCAA Division I Conference had videos with spiritual elements. Table C.2 breaks down the SAF inclusion rates by NCAA conference.

Conference USA, the PAC-12 and the Big 12 Conferences had a higher occurrence of spiritual themes compared to the other conferences. Conference USA led with 91.67% (n=11) of their 12 videos including spirituality. The Mountain West Conference had the smallest percentage of videos with spiritual messaging at only 40%

(n=4) of the conference's 10 videos. Figure B.4 is a representation of the 11 divisions and the percentage of videos that included spiritual messaging.

Although each conference included spirituality in their messaging, it is key to point out that the highest percentage of spirituality was identified in Conference USA and the lowest percentage was in the Mountain West Conference. Figure B.5 provides a regional footprint of the two conferences. Spirituality in Advertising may be linked to regional preferences based on the findings.

Public and Private Universities

To determine if state-funded or religiously-affiliated universities employed spirituality at different rates, the study looked at the public or private status of each organization. Table C.3 displays the frequency and percentage of Public and Private Universities featured videos with spirituality. Both public and private institutions had elements of spirituality in the majority of their advertising pieces.

Publicly funded colleges had a higher percentage of spiritual messaging compared to the private counterparts with 68.37% (n=67) of public universities presenting at least one of the SAF Core Beliefs in their featured YouTube video. Figure B.6 displays the percentage of videos with and without spirituality identified in public universities within the study.

The University of Wyoming's ad, *The World Needs More Cowboys*, was coded for multiple forms of spirituality, SAFs 1, 5,6,7,8, 10, 11 and 15. The video suggests that the world needed the viewer, a journey or path laid ahead and self-actualization could be attained if the viewer engaged in the learning opportunities offered by the school. The YouTube video transcript follows:

“Restless curiosity, whatever happened to that? When did we stop thinking up new questions and daring to chase down their answers? Should we blindly follow predetermined paths when they never take us anywhere new? Should we really be on autopilot and there's still so much to explore off the beaten trail? The world needs more wonder more outside thinkers, hungry for a challenge. The world needs more cowboys and not just the kind that sweep you off your feet and ride you off into the sunset. Ours are diverse Cowboys who come in every sexes shape color and Creed they come from Wyoming Montana Delaware and Nigeria because it's not what you are that makes you a cowboy or cowgirl, but who you are. It's a shared spirit it's the spirit of the underdog, the trailblazer, the kind of spirit that longs for something approved the kind that emboldened those who possess it to stand on the perimeter and howl at the unknown with unbendable optimism. The world needs more people to pick up the torch of progress and fearless adventure on words. The world needs more Cowboys” (The University of Wyoming, 2018).

Wyoming received a strong positive response from the ad; the university launched their entire campaign months ahead of schedule and potential applicants reported an increased likeliness to attend the university after watching the video (University of Wyoming, 2018). Based on Wyoming's survey findings, the video's strong appeal to integrate with others and unite all of mankind may have contributed to the increased recruitment, but additional inquiry is needed.

In contrast to the public colleges and universities, only 52.94% (n=9) of private institutions included the beliefs, although the spiritual messages were still in the majority. Private universities in the United States have historical ties to organized religious denominations as such, identifying elements of spirituality was not unexpected within this particular classification. Figure B.7 displays the percentage of videos with and without spirituality identified in private universities within the study.

Northwestern University's video, titled “*Northwestern Global Anthem*”, included spiritual elements, SAF were coded 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 13. Northwestern's worldly appeal is introduced as “a starting point to take you in whatever direction you choose,”

evoking a journey, an action component and a path to integrate with others and possibly unite the world (Northwestern University, 2017). The four-minute highlight includes motivational music and animation alongside actual photos of the university's campuses and professors. The narrative ties together different areas of research to the real world impact the discoveries have on mankind.

Carnegie Research Activity Levels

Aside from conference classifications and public or private designations, the Carnegie level of research activity was used to compare universities usage of spirituality. R1 universities are doctoral universities with the highest research activity as identified by Carnegie. R2 are doctoral universities with high research activity. R3 are doctoral universities with moderate research activities, and the study's "Other" category captured all other universities without the designations previously mentioned. Spiritual messaging was detected in all categories. The finding of spirituality in each classification suggests the wide use and preference to incorporate the spiritual appeals into college advertising materials. Table C.4 shows the frequency and percentage of videos that included spirituality by Carnegie classification, or research activity levels.

R3 doctoral universities with moderate research activities had the largest percentage of spiritual videos compared to the other categories. Spirituality was detected in 80% (n=4) of the five R3 institution videos included in the study. Of the 60 R1 colleges and universities in the study, spirituality was identified in 71.67% (n=43). Figure B.8 shows the percentage of videos including spirituality among each category.

Florida State University's ad, titled "*Florida State University Institutional Message*," was not identified as one containing spirituality. FSU is classified as R1 by

Carnegie. FSU's 30-second video featured the university seal, the mascot, pictures and scenes of campus and research activities. This is an example of a college communicating its brand without the use of religious or spiritual elements. The title of the ad itself stands out for the lack of personalization or emotional appeals. Figure B.9 is a screenshot from Florida State University's video that displays the academics and research performed on campus.

HSI, HBCU and Tribal Universities

There were no Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) or Tribal Universities within the NCAA Division I schools included in this study, but there were Hispanic Serving Institutions. HSIs and non-designated universities alike shared the preference for spiritual messaging and content in their YouTube videos. It is key to remember that universities can apply to become an HSI, but the designation of HBCU or Tribal is based on the colleges' historical past. Table C.5 features the frequencies and percentages of the two categories.

Florida International University was one of the 11 HSIs in the study. The university's video, titled "*FIU Commercial 2018 - We Believe,*" has a title with a transcendent connotation and content that was found to be spiritual. Florida International University, like Florida State University, has a R1 Carnegie Classification, yet embraced a spiritual message in sharp contrast to FSU. FIU provides a short synopsis of their past and then details the beliefs of the university and expresses a desire to positively impact the world by better preparing for hurricanes and even helping families without proper healthcare live better healthier lives. At the conclusion of the video, the narrator delivers

a powerful message stating, “above all else, we believe in you” (Florida International University, 2018).

San Jose State University (SJSU) is an HSI that excluded spiritual messaging from its YouTube commercial. The university’s ad, titled “Welcome to SJSU,” was posted in September 2011 and remains the highlighted content (San Jose State University, 2011). The video has no narration or displayed words on the screen. The viewer sees shots of campus and students engaged in learning and research. The scenes are interspersed with shots of campus social events including a concert. The spot ends with the university logo and website for more information. SJSU has newer videos on its official YouTube channel, but chooses to keep the seven-year old commercial in the featured content area. The video’s lack of information and appeal stood out from others in the study.

Shared Words and Sentiments

The study found common verbiage used across the video transcripts, similar spiritual words among the videos’ titles and even comparable words visually on display in the videos. The words most frequently used in the universities’ transcripts are telling. A query of the transcripts found that the word “university” was used (n=98) more than any other word in the narration (see Table C.6). This count does not include any onscreen appearance of the word visually or the number of times the word university appears in a logo or picture on screen. The appearance of the word university is an expected result based on the subject matter included in the study. Other words supporting the spiritual findings of this study in the text included: world (n=85), people (n=76), together (n=34), community (n=28), experience (n=27), believe (n=19), family (n=18) and hope (n=14).

The desire to integrate with others is seen in the appearance of words like together, people, community and family. Depending on its' use in the text, the word world helped universities link to SAF 6, Unity of all Mankind.

Secondly, the video titles themselves were descriptive tools used by the university to engage their audience. The study found that the integration with others and self-actualization were commonly identified SAF themes within the content. Many of the video titles also carried the same spiritual appeal. For example, *Enlighten* was the title of the University of Texas-Austin's featured video and Oregon State University's video, *Find Your Direction*, share transcendent or spiritual themes. Other noteworthy titles included: *Your Tomorrow*, *Born to Soar Part One*, and *Be Boundless – For Washington, For the World*.

Another common event was the appearance on screen of motivational or empowered words. The University of Colorado Boulder's video contained no narration, but the video footage was enhanced with words on the screen like "Be inspired," and "Be Boulder" (University of Colorado Boulder, 2016). In the same way, "*In Our Grit Our Glory*," the University of Nebraska's featured video, used the words "Grit," "Work," "Connecting," and "Unlocked" on screen to enhance their narrative (University of Nebraska–Lincoln, 2018). The spiritual message delivered by Nebraska was that of hard work and integration with others allows one to unlock their mind and true potential to achieve self-actualization and influence the world.

Common Production and Visual Techniques

There were many subtle commonalities woven across the study's sample of featured videos. Time-lapse video techniques were used in many of the short videos. The

rapid passing of time served the purpose of increasing energy and excitement in some of the scenes while other video segments used the day to night experience to capture an extended length of time in their message. Although the purpose of the time lapsed materials may have varied, the frequency of the technique's use should not be overlooked.

Many of the YouTube videos contained background footage of expected or emblematic scenes. It was a common occurrence for a university's video to include an individual walking a path, or for a video to start with a student's first day on campus and end with their graduation ceremony. Another recurrent theme was the appearance of sunrises and sunsets to begin and end the advertisements. Perhaps all of these familiar scenes were used to evoke feelings or mood for the viewer to experience a journey with the university. Nevertheless, these anticipated scenes may be part of the "sea of sameness" Baylor's Dr. Livingstone eluded to in her 2018 message where she and her university tried to set themselves apart (Livingstone, 2018). Another frequent event in the videos was the appearance of research activities. Many scenes featured chemistry labs, scientists and electronics serving to reinforce a university's academic and research purpose. A high percentage, 69.57 % (n=80) of the videos promoted research activities and academic accomplishments of the university.

Live Streams

As previously mentioned, not all universities included in the study chose to highlight a single video on their YouTube channel. Some universities opted for a long library list of all their videos to be displayed for the viewers to pick from and others chose a different route. In place of a featured video three of the universities chose to

highlight a live feed on their YouTube channels. Auburn University's YouTube channel featured three live streams at the time of data analysis. The multiple live stream options provided viewers with options to see the campus in action. Cameras delivered real-time vantage points of Cater Lawn, Samford Park and Thach Concourse on Auburn's campus (Auburn University, 2018). Syracuse University and the University of Central Florida (UCF) were the other two campuses opting for the live option, and each hosted one stream on their YouTube channels at the time of data analysis. Instead of live streaming a location or popular spot on campus, UCF utilized their channel to deliver coverage of live events, presentations and lectures on campus. Moreover, their channel promotes upcoming live stream occasions. The live streaming capability was first made available on YouTube in 2011, but findings in this study suggest the feature may be utilized more in the future by colleges and universities (YouTube, 2018).

CHAPTER FIVE

Limitations and Conclusions

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the limited sample and content provided by coding only the featured video on each YouTube channel. Thousands of videos have been uploaded by NCAA Division I colleges to the social media platform, and this qualitative study was only able to look at a sample. Furthermore, the effect on college enrollment and impact on the universities' brand were not measured by this study. A quantitative study could reveal more details and quantify the impact of spirituality, if any, on recruitment rates. A study structured similarly to the one conducted by the University of Wyoming would offer additional insights for each video. Moreover, a qualitative interview or survey of the university official producing the advertisement and associated campaigns may reveal the motivation and intent behind the brand messaging included in each ad. Other limitations of the study include the omission of NCAA Division II and III colleges and universities, not to mention that the NCAA only serves American universities and does not account for international colleges or universities. The use of spirituality in advertising may differ among the other NCAA divisions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, spirituality was used frequently in the study's highlighted YouTube videos. Findings revealed that a majority of all NCAA Division I conferences featured spirituality except for the Mountain West Conference. Spirituality was identified in 40%

(n=4) of the Mountain West Conference featured videos. The majority of private and public university videos alike contained elements of spirituality as determined by the study's coders using the SAF Core Beliefs. When aligning the universities' videos with their Carnegie Research Classifications, the study found that R3 universities' videos contained spirituality at a higher rate than the other categories. The study established no apparent difference between HSI, HBCU or Tribal universities and the other universities with a nonaffiliated status. That said, only 11 HSIs are members of the NCAA Division I sample, and there were no HBCU or Tribal universities in the category examined. When HSIs were compared to the non-group, the study found that spirituality was present in a majority of both groups.

In a qualitative study that interviewed consumers after watching commercial advertisements containing spirituality “dense” messaging, researchers concluded that viewers are inspired by the ads, which is the underlying intent of the advertiser (Marmor-Lavie & Stout, 2016, p. 179). This study has identified the use of spirituality in collegiate videos. Further investigation and research are required to ascertain the intent of the college and university staff creating and publishing the advertising materials for social media to better understand the multifaceted intentions of the messaging relayed in the videos. Another avenue of research still to be explored is the overall effectiveness of the spiritual messaging on the potential consumers of the university videos. As previously stated, the University of Wyoming found that their video strongly resonated with their online audience and watching the video increased the likelihood of attendance by individuals surveyed. Stephenson, Heckert and Yerger (2016) acknowledged key influencers in a prospective student's life like a parent, family member or friend acting

for the brand as a “brand ambassador” (p. 500). The use of social media, like YouTube, allows a university to reach both groups of their desired audience, prospective students and their influencers, simultaneously with messaging. The integration of spiritual messaging within YouTube videos carries the ability for universities to influence and inspire their online viewing audience.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Spirituality in Advertising Framework Coding

Table A.1. Spirituality in Advertising Framework 16 Core Ideas

Core Idea	Definition
SAF 1. The action component	One of the major characteristics of today's seekers is the urge for personal experience. Seekers complain that they do not want to follow the vision, creed, or law of someone else's experience and follow it as a faith.
SAF 2. The big picture	Spiritual people aspire to see the big picture in every situation, although it is impossible. They try to be aware that there is more to the state of now and to our own individual self. Formatting
SAF 3. Letting go	We argue that spiritual people aspire to reach the state of "letting go," that is, the process of separating ourselves from our ego.
SAF 4. More than instant gratification	Spiritual people try to resist the allure of instant gratification, that is, things to eat, physical things to be done, or consumption that represents an illusion. Spiritual people aspire to understand that immediate satisfaction and stimulus are not the real truth and that we should experience life beyond these limits. Many times we need to resist the immediate stimuli and satisfaction to reach higher fulfillment and being.
SAF 5. Constant examination of life	Asking "why" is a major component of being a spiritual person.

(continued)

Core Idea	Definition
SAF 6. Unity of all mankind	Kale (2004) argues that real spiritual people build upon connection and integration with others rather than on separation. Behind this assumption stands the belief or axiom of ultimate unity of all beings (Kale, 2004). Most spiritual traditions believe there is a string connecting all human beings. As such, like in the ripple effect, whatever happens to one human being affects the rest of us, as a total sum.
SAF 7. Integration with others	Researchers emphasized that spirituality is manifested through our everyday lives. It is through interaction and relating to others we can grow and implement spirituality. Not every interaction though should be counted as spiritual; it has to be a significant interaction, in other words, an interaction that positively affects and influences the people involved in it.
SAF 8. Long-term journey	In every possible context seekers identify their spiritual experience as a never-ending, spiraling journey. A journey with ups and downs, physical elements, and inward elements, but yet again a journey (Lew, 2005; Linzer, 1996; Schmidt, 2005).
SAF 9. Ritualism	Spiritual people tend to use ritualism (it does not have to be a religious ritualism but certainly can be) to improve concentration, focus, and balance. Ritualism could be anything that one can invent as long as it meshes with spiritual principles. For example, it could be an act of nature appreciation or an act of gratitude toward a person.

(continued)

Core Idea	Definition
SAF 10. Self-actualization	Spiritual people seek to reach to their highest human potential, as Emmons (2006) suggested. According to Maslow (1965), self-actualization is the highest of human needs; this is a phase a person reaches after other basic needs are gratified. It includes aspects such as meaningfulness, creativity, authenticity, helping others, and playfulness. Spiritual people aspire to reach the stage of self-actualization where a person is utilizing all his or her positive potential (e.g., in every aspect of life, including relationship, career, family, society).
SAF 11. Anything is possible	Spiritual people aspire to unchain themselves. They believe that we are not restricted by anything or anyone in this world but ourselves and our doubts. In other words, our fears and anxieties prevent us from achieving our goals.
SAF 12. Live in the present	Eastern philosophies, especially Buddhism, emphasize the importance of being constantly present in our life. Living in the present is a tough mission because the human mind always wonders away to the future or the past. Spiritual people attempt with mindfulness and meditation to live the present.
SAF 13. Take responsibility	We tend to blame others for our misfortunes (Lew, 2005). Spiritual people strive to take responsibility (Frankl, 1984) and are committed to change personal misfortunes. However, at the same time they should not waste energy on guilt (Solomon, 2002). Accordingly, being spiritual in that sense is being responsible for our own actions but not suffering from guilt because of it.

(continued)

Core Idea	Definition
SAF 14. Gratitude	Solomon (2002) argues that gratitude is an essential element of being a spiritual person. Appreciation of the meaning life bestows into it. Thus when we are grateful for what we have, even suffering, we are acting in a spiritual meaningful manner. Nothing should be taken for granted.
SAF 15. Transformation	One thing that becomes noticeable when spiritual people begin researching themselves is their need to change, to transform. Some spiritual traditions describe the life of most human beings, before they decide upon a spiritual transformation, as “death.” In other words, people act automatically, reactively, out of familiar patterns and traditional habits, without mindfulness and careful observation of who they really are (Langan, 2006; Lew, 2005). Spiritual people believe that change in a proactive manner is the key to fulfillment and happiness.
SAF 16. Suffering	Spiritual people understand and feel that life is dynamic: there are ups and downs, peak moments and low points. Being spiritual does not mean feeling positive all the time or ignoring suffering. On the contrary, welcoming suffering and facing it better represents the spiritual way. Traveling on a spiritual path brings with it obstacles and difficulties.

Note. SAF Core Ideas and condensed descriptions (Marmor-Lavie et al., 2009).

APPENDIX B

Figures and Video Screenshots

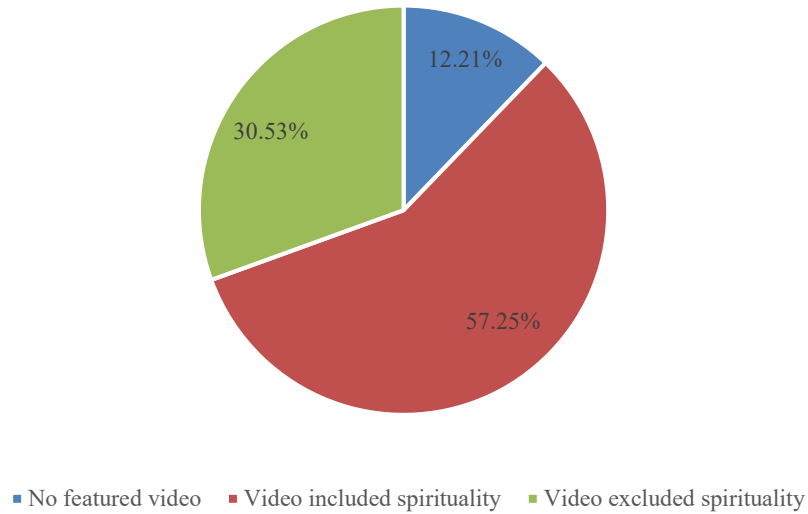


Figure B.1. NCAA Division I YouTube Channels (Percentages)

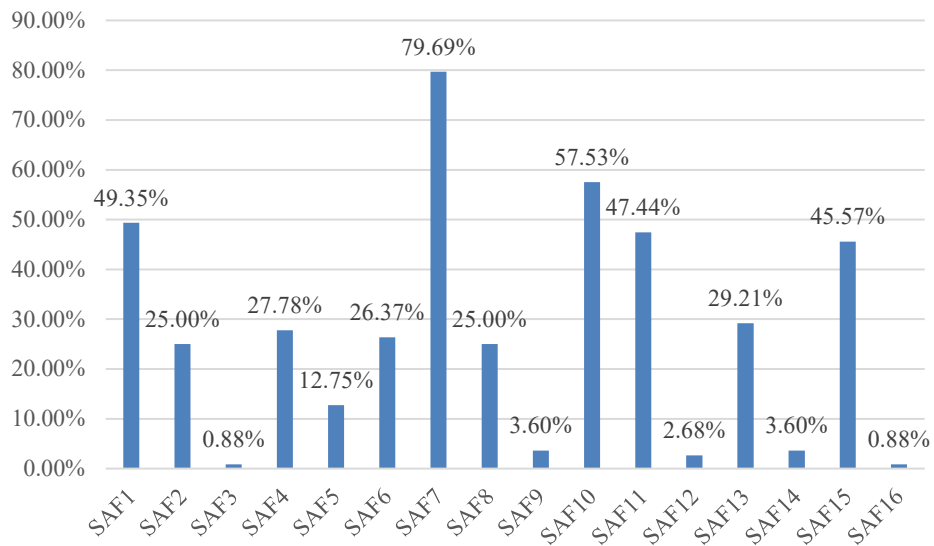


Figure B.2. SAF Core Beliefs Identified in the Featured YouTube Videos (Percentages)



Figure B.3. University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Screenshot. A screenshot of the university’s featured YouTube video picturing a group of student dancers (University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2017).

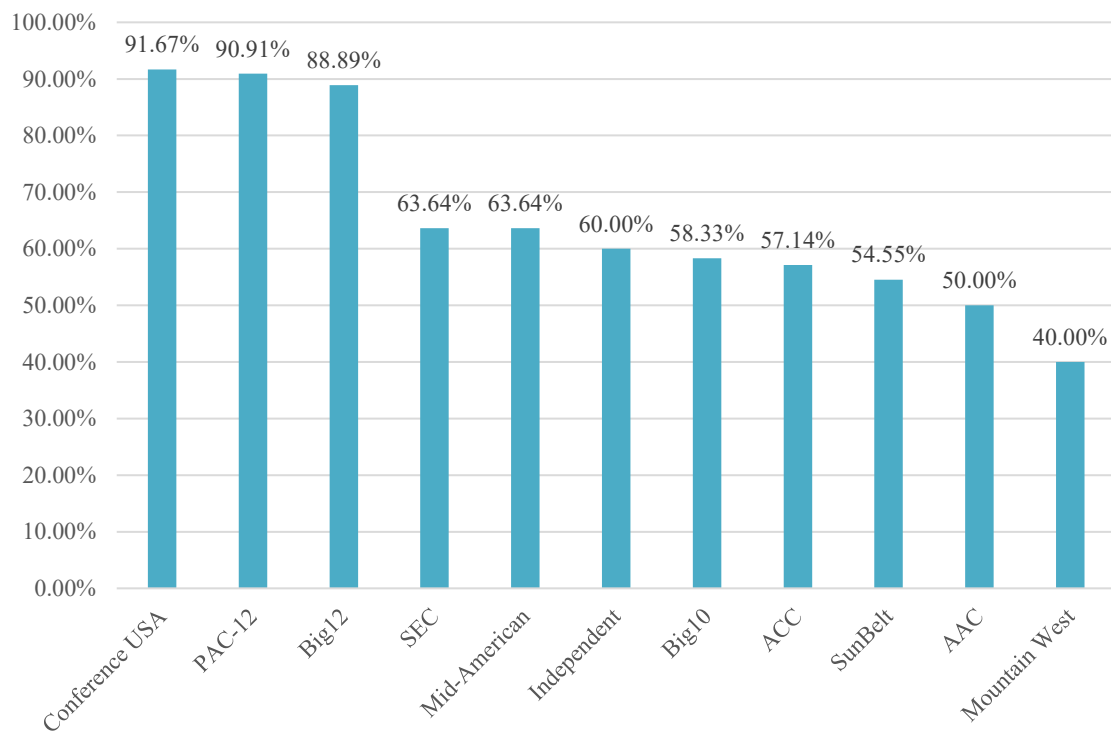


Figure B.4. Percentage of videos including elements of spirituality within the messaging broken down by NCAA Conferences.

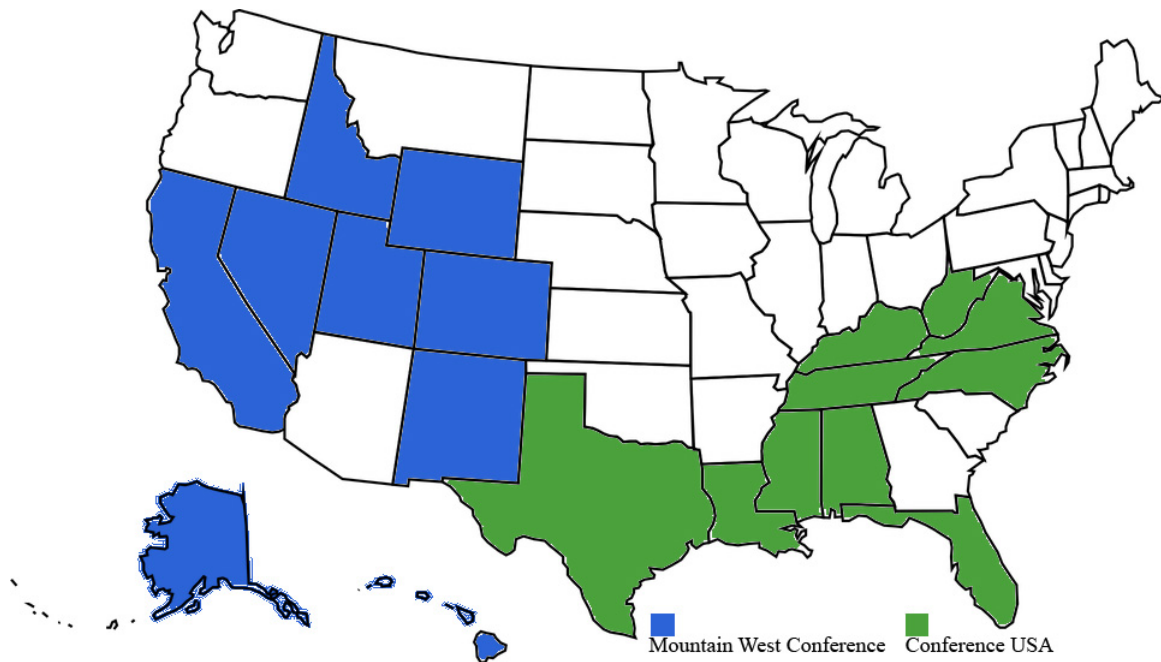


Figure B.5. States in blue represent locations of the Mountain West Conference universities and those in green are representative of Conference USA.

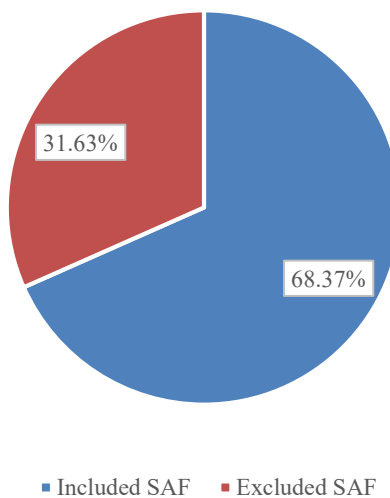


Figure B.6. Public institutions highlighted YouTube videos. Displays the percentage of public institutions inclusion and exclusion of spiritual messaging. The majority of public universities included spirituality.

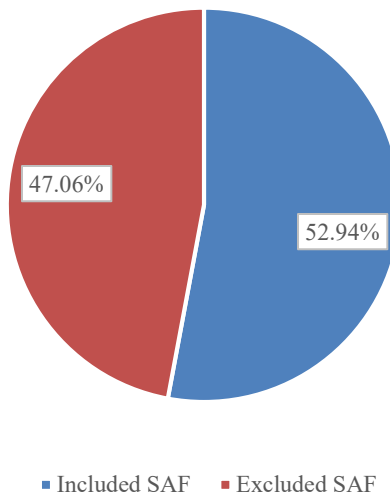


Figure B.7. Private institutions highlighted YouTube videos. Displays the percentage of private institutions inclusion and exclusion of spiritual messaging. The majority of private universities included spirituality.

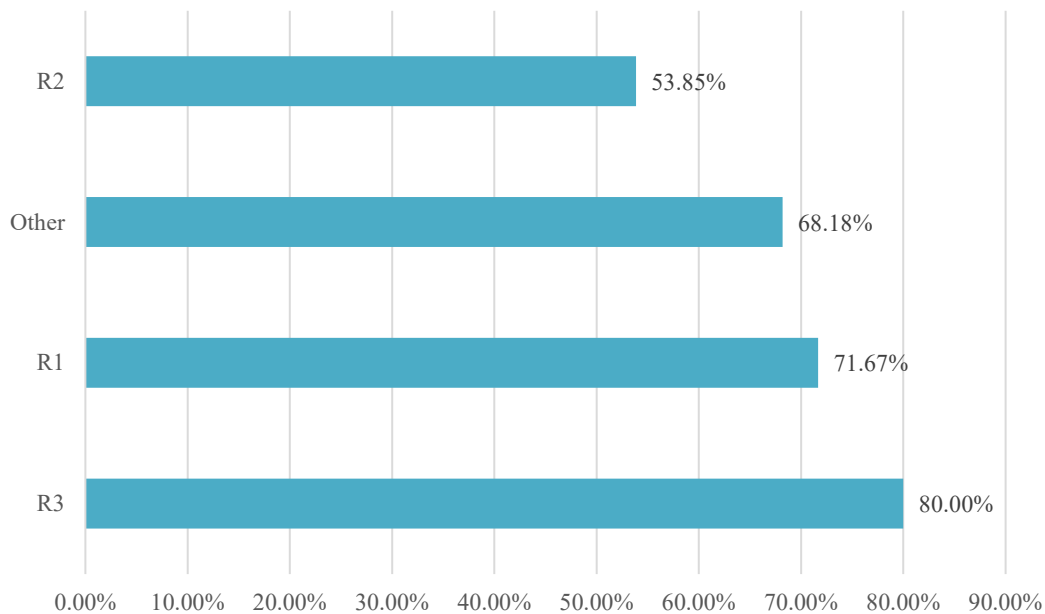


Figure B.8. Percentage of SAF Videos based on Carnegie Research Classifications. Displays the percentage of SAF videos based on the universities' Carnegie research classifications.



Figure B.9. Florida State University Screenshot. A screenshot of Florida State University's featured YouTube video shows researchers performing some task in a lab (Florida State University, 2017). FSU's featured video did not have a spiritual element identified by this study.

APPENDIX C

Tables

Table C.1. *SAF inclusion rates (n=115 videos)*

SAF #	Core Idea	Frequency	Percentage
SAF 1	The action component	38	49.35%
SAF 2	The big picture	23	25.00%
SAF 3	Letting go	1	0.88%
SAF 4	More than instant gratification	25	27.78%
SAF 5	Constant examination of life	13	12.75%
SAF 6	Unity of all mankind	24	26.37%
SAF 7	Integration with others	51	79.69%
SAF 8	Long-term journey	23	25.00%
SAF 9	Ritualism	4	3.60%
SAF 10	Self-actualization	42	57.53%
SAF 11	Anything is possible	37	47.44%
SAF 12	Live in the present	3	2.68%
SAF 13	Take responsibility	26	29.21%
SAF 14	Gratitude	4	3.60%
SAF 15	Transformation	36	45.57%
SAF 16	Suffering	1	0.88%

Note. SAF 7 was identified most often in the featured YouTube videos. SAF 3 and 16 were identified the least in the featured YouTube videos.

Table C.2. *SAF inclusion rates by NCAA Division I Conference (n=115 videos)*

Conference	Frequency (SAF/# videos)	Percentage
Conference USA	11/12	91.67%
Pac 12	10/11	90.91%
Big 12	8/9	88.89
SEC	7/11	63.64%
Mid-American	7/11	63.64%
Independent	3/5	60.00%
Big10	7/12	58.33%
ACC	8/14	57.14%
Sun Belt	6/11	54.55%
AAC	5/10	50.00%
Mountain West	4/10	40.00%

Note. Every conference in the sample had elements of spirituality identified at varying rates. Conference USA, Pac 12 and the Big 12 had the highest rates of spirituality. The Mountain West conference has the lowest rates of spirituality identified in the sample.

Table C.3. *SAF inclusion rates by Public or Private Status (n=115 videos)*

Status	Frequency (SAF/# videos)	Percentage
Public	67/98	68.37%
Private	9/17	52.94%

Note. Spirituality core ideas were identified in the majority of the videos within both statuses, Private and Public. Public universities used spirituality ideas in a larger frequency when compared to their private counterparts.

Table C.4. *SAF inclusion rates by Carnegie Classification (n=115 videos)*

Classification	Frequency (SAF/# videos)	Percentage
Research 1	4/5	71.67%
Research 2	43/60	53.85%
Research 3	15/24	80.00%
Other	14/26	62.50%

Note. Spirituality core ideas were identified in the majority of the videos within each Carnegie classification. Research 3 and Research 1 institutions had the highest percentage of spirituality in their videos.

Table C.5. *SAF inclusion rates by Tribal, HBCU or HSI compared to Non Status*
(*n=115 videos*)

Designation	Frequency (SAF/# videos)	Percentage
Tribal, HBCU or HSI	6/10	60.00%
Non-Tribal, HBCU or HSI	70/105	66.67%

Note. There were no Tribal or HBCU colleges in the NCAA Division I school sample only HSIs. In total, there were 11 HSIs in the NCAA Division I sample. Spirituality was identified in the majority of both categories.

Table C.6. *Word Frequency of Video Transcripts*

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
university	10	98	0.65
just	4	91	0.60
world	5	85	0.56
like	4	77	0.51
people	6	76	0.50
students	8	66	0.43
know	4	65	0.43
one	3	63	0.42
really	6	56	0.37
think	5	47	0.31
life	4	41	0.27
new	3	41	0.27
place	5	40	0.26
now	3	38	0.25
time	4	38	0.25
get	3	35	0.23
years	5	35	0.23
together	8	34	0.22
way	3	34	0.22
day	3	33	0.22
different	9	33	0.22
make	4	33	0.22
great	5	32	0.21
going	5	31	0.20
right	5	31	0.20
year	4	31	0.20
today	5	30	0.20

(continued)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
also	4	28	0.18
community	9	28	0.18
help	4	28	0.18
much	4	28	0.18
see	3	28	0.18
something	9	28	0.18
campus	6	27	0.18
every	5	27	0.18
experience	10	27	0.18
want	4	27	0.18
work	4	27	0.18
many	4	26	0.17
things	6	26	0.17
kind	4	25	0.16
never	5	25	0.16
city	4	24	0.16
even	4	24	0.16
first	5	24	0.16
around	6	23	0.15
well	4	23	0.15
love	4	22	0.14
still	5	22	0.14
find	4	21	0.14
good	4	21	0.14
lot	3	21	0.14
take	4	21	0.14
always	6	20	0.13
back	4	20	0.13
change	6	20	0.13
come	4	20	0.13
maybe	5	20	0.13
research	8	20	0.13
believe	7	19	0.13
building	8	19	0.13
home	4	19	0.13
lives	5	19	0.13
look	4	19	0.13
made	4	19	0.13
opportunity	11	19	0.13
school	6	19	0.13

(continued)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
working	7	19	0.13
big	3	18	0.12
ever	4	18	0.12
everything	10	18	0.12
family	6	18	0.12
got	3	18	0.12
health	6	18	0.12
better	6	17	0.11
part	4	17	0.11
program	7	17	0.11
state	5	17	0.11
able	4	16	0.11
actually	8	16	0.11
become	6	16	0.11
best	4	16	0.11
feel	4	16	0.11
next	4	16	0.11
thing	5	16	0.11
two	3	16	0.11
war	3	16	0.11
welcome	7	16	0.11
applause	8	15	0.10
important	9	15	0.10
needs	5	15	0.10
proud	5	15	0.10
faculty	7	14	0.09
hope	4	14	0.09
ideas	5	14	0.09
last	4	14	0.09
nothing	7	14	0.09
band	4	13	0.09
college	7	13	0.09
done	4	13	0.09

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