BRAND EQUITY & COLLEGE ATHLETICS:
INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF BRAND UNCERTAINTY SITUATIONS ON
CONSUMER-BASED BRAND EQUITY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Brand equity is a much discussed topic in the marketing literature and in a variety of fields, including sport management. As sport organizations face stronger competition for consumers’ entertainment dollars, brand equity has become a more relevant topic. Using brand equity research from both the marketing and sport management literature as a basis, this study attempts to measure the effects of brand uncertainty situations (e.g., times when a consumer must think about how they feel about a specific brand) on the brand equity that consumers hold for a Division I college football team. This study also advances the understanding of what situations can “activate” brand equity in the minds of consumers and the impact of such activation on consumers’ decision-making. The purpose of this study was to determine if individuals with strong brand equity respond differently than those with weak brand equity to a specific brand uncertainty situation. Students (N = 141) from the university under investigation participated in the experiment. Participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire measuring their brand equity for a college football team. A week later, the same participants were asked to read a fictitious news article (presented as a real news article) depicting a brand uncertainty situation for the football team. The fictitious scenarios described a positive product change situation, a negative product change situation, a negative word of mouth situation, and a positive
word of mouth situation. After reading these articles, participants then responded to the questionnaire measuring their brand equity. Results indicate that the majority of the participants had very strong brand equity for the team in question. There was a lack of participants with weak brand equity to determine how their brand equity would be affected by the brand uncertainty situations. However, the results for participants with strong brand equity indicate that brand equity is persistent and resistant to change in the face of one uncertain situation. These findings support previous research on consumer-based brand equity that acknowledges its importance to organizations in the long run.
Dedicated to my family
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On-field competition has been a hallmark of athletics throughout history. Competition is an integral component of sports; it is part of what makes sports so compelling and popular. Recent history has shown that the off-field competition among teams has become just as fierce as the competition on the field. Because of its escalating popularity, sport has grown into a highly commercialized and very competitive industry in this country. Consumers have so many different sport and entertainment choices these days that the competition is forcing sport organizations to become more professional in their operations and marketing. Sport organizations have looked to the corporate world for guidance and have begun modeling themselves after successful businesses. Many companies have adopted brand management as the strategy that will sustain them in the long run and offers them the opportunity to build and maintain a competitive advantage. In short, brand management is the practice of building and maintaining successful brands. “Companies must build strong brands to be competitive” (Joachimsthaler & Aaker, 1997, p. 39). Brands are successful because they are able to leverage the brand equity that consumers hold.
LITERATURE ON BRAND EQUITY

This study is concerned with brand equity and certain components comprising a sports team’s brand equity. A great deal has been written regarding brand equity and Figure 1.1 represents a conceptual framework of brand equity and its components taken from the work of others including Keller (1993, 1998) and Aaker (1991, 1996). Aaker’s (1991) model is shown in Appendix A and Keller’s (1993) model is shown in Appendix B. Each of the components of the figure, as well as other key concepts, is explained in more detail in Chapter 2. Brand equity is a key element to branding strategies and brand management. Raggio and Leone (2005) define brand equity as a consumer’s “attitude, perception, belief or desire that a brand will meet its promise of value [value to the consumer, not brand value]” (p. 26-27). It is the value of the brand for the consumer (not the value of the brand for the organization). Brand equity represents what the brand means to the consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005). Consumers’ perceptions are what create and sustain brand equity. Brand equity is created and managed through branding, or the use of an organization’s brand (its image, logo, etc.) in the marketplace to reach out to consumers. Brand equity can help these organizations differentiate themselves in a crowded marketplace. Many professional sports teams are now turning to brand management as a marketing strategy that will build and leverage brand equity with their consumers as an approach that can sustain them in the long run (Gladden, Irwin, & Sutton, 2001).

Aaker’s (1991) model illustrates that brand equity provides value to the customer by enhancing the customer’s processing of brand information, confidence in their purchase decision, and use satisfaction. This model also shows that brand equity
Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Components of Consumer-Based Brand Equity
provides value to the firm by enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of marketing programs, brand loyalty, prices and margins, brand extensions, trade leverage, and competitive advantage. Raggio and Leone (2005) propose a model that shows that brand equity leads to individual-level outcomes and market-level outcomes (see Appendix C). This model focuses on the value of brand equity to the organization. These individual-level outcomes include more positive consumer responses to changes in personal or usage contexts, product changes, product harm crises, new competition, brand extensions, claims made by a competitor, word of mouth, and out-of-stock situations. The potential market-level outcomes include loyalty, price premiums, market share, brand profitability, enhanced channel relationships, and human resource advantages.

Brand equity lives in the minds of consumers. It is comprised of the consumer’s collection of brand associations (Keller, 1993, 1998). A brand association is “anything that connects the customer to the brand. It can include user imagery, product attributes, use situations, organizational associations, brand personality, and symbols” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 17). There are three types of brand associations: attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993). Brand associations help consumers differentiate or position the brand (Aaker, 1991). Once brand awareness is established, the brand associations are the genesis of everything that consumers associate with a particular brand, especially brand equity.

Gladden and Funk (2002) conducted research on brand associations in team sport. They identified 16 dimensions of brand associations that include attributes like success, star player, head coach, stadium, logo design and tradition. The dimensions also include benefits like fan identification, nostalgia, escape and pride in place. Fan identification is
a heavily researched concept in sport management and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Gladden and Funk (2002) “conceptualize fan identification as a component of the brand association framework. That is, identification with a certain team fulfills a sport consumer’s need to affiliate with something successful or desirable and thus is one form of brand associations” (p. 59). Fan identification is one brand association that goes into the creation brand equity for sport teams. The study of brand equity extends the sport management literature beyond fan identification. It is important to recognize the dimensions of brand associations because they provide a deeper understanding of brand equity. Together all of a brand’s associations comprise its brand equity. Given the major models of brand equity, this study used the conceptualization of consumer-based brand equity shown in Figure 1.1.

MEASURING BRAND EQUITY

Despite the popularity of studying branding principles and brand equity, in particular, no consistent measure of brand equity has been accepted. “Researchers have proposed measures of brand equity, but their operationalizations define and measure only outcomes of brand equity; that is, only benefits that are hypothesized to accrue to brands that possess brand equity” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 3). This focus on outcome measures has hindered our understanding of brand equity. There have been several criticisms of using outcome measures, including the fact that outcome measures have alternative explanations (Keller, 1993; Raggio & Leone, 2005). For example, measuring brand loyalty (a potential outcome) by looking at repurchase rates may measure consumer inertia or a lack of available alternatives in addition to brand equity. Also, some consumers may hold positive brand equity for a brand they have no intentions of
Another general criticism is that “outcome measures lack diagnostic ability” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 4). At best an outcome measure is a snapshot of the brand’s performance at one point in time – it does not specify how it got there, or how to change the outcome in the future.

Raggio and Leone (2005) discuss several major reasons that using outcome measures are inappropriate for the study of brand equity, including the exclusion of non-consumers and future potential consumers, and the reliance on a purchase. A purchase is not required for a consumer to hold brand equity for an organization. When deciding on a new car, a customer who chooses to buy a sedan can still hold strong, positive brand equity for a sports car that she did not purchase. She may end up buying that sports car the next time she buys a car or she may never buy it, but her brand equity for that car exists at any rate. Outcome measures often “ignore latent brand equity that represents the potential of the brand” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 6). While some of these outcome measures like brand loyalty or market share would be appropriate proxies for the brand equity of some firms, they cannot be applied universally. “The ultimate goal of brand equity research should be to understand how to develop brand equity and how to leverage brand equity to create value” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 23).

Often these proxies for brand equity are measuring market-level outcomes. Market-level data like price premiums or market share is collected and used as a measure of brand equity. However, aggregated data provides little information about the individual consumers, which can help identify what the brand does well and what it needs to change. For example, a brand may have a 15% market share, but that information does not help determine what consumers (and non-consumers) would like to get from the
brand that they are currently not getting; and it does not tell the organization what the
brand represents to the consumers. It is important to measure brand equity at the
individual level because that is where brand equity resides. This means that individual
consumer data needs to be collected to measure each person’s brand equity. Recent
studies have attempted to measure brand equity at the individual level. For example, Yoo
and Donthu (2001) created a scale to measure brand equity at the consumer level. The
scale measured consumer-based brand equity using four dimensions. These dimensions
are brand loyalty (a consumer’s perception of his or her own loyalty to the brand), the
consumer’s perceived quality of the brand, brand awareness and brand associations
(combined as one dimension) and a measure of overall brand equity. These more recent
attempts at measuring brand equity at the consumer level have helped direct the focus of
brand equity research toward the individual, rather than the market, which can aid in the
understanding of consumer-based brand equity. Because it is believed to exist within the
consumer, brand equity can be measured at the individual level as a consumer’s strong
positive attitude toward a brand (Raggio & Leone, 2005).

Given that brand equity always exists at some level, Raggio and Leone (2005)
suggest “that it is most easily measured when a consumer faces a condition of
uncertainty” (p. 27). These conditions of uncertainty force a consumer to think about
their decisions. They must identify their consideration set and determine if they are
willing to make the same decision they’ve made in the past or if they are going to try a
different product or service. By forcing consumers to think about their consideration set,
these situations of brand uncertainty can “activate” the consumers’ brand equity. For
example, if a consumer regularly buys Tide laundry detergent, he holds a certain level of
brand equity for it. However, let’s assume he hears a news report (or an advertisement or he hears from a friend) that indicates that All laundry detergent cleans clothes as well as Tide, but costs less per load. The consumer now faces a condition of uncertainty. He must re-evaluate his decision to buy Tide detergent. If his brand equity for the quality and value of the Tide brand is strong enough, then he will most likely continue to purchase that brand. However, if his brand equity is weaker, then he may try the All brand to see if the report (or ad or friend) was accurate.

Any situation of uncertainty forces a consumer to think about his or her consideration set and evaluate or “activate” the brand equity he or she holds for each brand in the set. Brand equity impacts consumers’ information processing, judgment, and choice (Raggio & Leone, 2005). Raggio and Leone (2005) identify several such uncertainty situations in which brand equity may become activated: changes in the individual’s personal or usage situations; the introduction of a new brand into a category or assortment; changes (positive or negative) to an existing product; brand extensions; product harm crises; claims made by a competitor; word of mouth; and out-of-stock situations.

An example of a change in personal situation in a sporting context would be a person who moves to a new city and must decide whether or not to support the local team or whether to continue to support their previous team from long distance. A person with strong brand equity for the previous team would probably continue to support the old team, although their brand equity for the local team may improve over time. An example of a new brand into a category would be the introduction of a major league football team in a city that is known for its college football team. The consumers must decide whether
or not they will be consumers of the new team, and then must decide whether they will be consumers of the new team to the exclusion of the old team, or in addition to the old team. An example of a change (positive or negative) to an existing product would be the addition or subtraction of a favorite player through free agency or draft. The addition of a favorite player is likely to enhance the consumer’s brand equity, but the loss of a favorite athlete may diminish the brand equity. The strength of the individual’s brand equity will determine the impact of such an addition or subtraction. An example of a brand extension situation would be the introduction of a team fan club (as a brand extension). The consumer is faced with the choice of joining the club and receiving any possible rewards or not joining. The individual’s brand equity will probably play a significant role in the decision.

An example of a product harm crisis situation would be a collegiate team being sanctioned by the NCAA. The consumer must decide whether or not to remain a consumer of this team. Again, the brand equity will probably guide the decision. An example of a word of mouth situation would be the top sports writers choosing one team to win the championship. Consumers then must decide if they will follow this team, go to games, and/or read about them or not. An individual’s brand equity for that particular team will most likely factor in their decision. Finally, an example of an out-of-stock situation would be if a consumer wanted to buy a particular team’s jersey, but it was sold out. The consumer could choose another team’s jersey and if their brand equity is not very strong for the out-of-stock team, then they are more likely to choose another team.
SPORT & BRAND EQUITY

Sport naturally has an uncertain outcome, which makes it exciting, but also makes it more difficult for sport managers to develop long-term relationships with consumers. Consumers love to root for a winning team. For most sport organizations, wins and losses have an impact on season ticket sales, attendance levels, merchandise sales, and other generally accepted performance measures. However, wins and losses, as well as which players are on the team, are beyond the control of sport marketers and managers. They must attempt to attract fans regardless of the team record or players.

In an article outlining the future of managing professional sports teams, Gladden, Irwin, and Sutton (2001) note that management activities will “evolve from a focus on winning as a means of realizing short-term profits to a focus on strategic management of the team brand as a means of realizing long-term appreciation in franchise value” (p. 298). By focusing on developing consumers’ brand equity for the team, these sport teams will not have to rely on winning on the field to be successful off the field. Strong brand equity among its consumers can insulate a team from the volatility of competitive sports. A losing season does not have to mean that the team is losing profits as well. Gladden and Milne (1999) found that brand equity can be more important to merchandise sales than winning in professional hockey (NHL) and baseball (MLB). Leveraging the team’s brand equity can be an effective way to market the team and make connections with consumers and potential consumers without relying on short-term successes like championships. Building and leveraging brand equity appears to be an increasingly important strategy for sport organizations that want to create and maintain a long-term competitive advantage.
Brand equity lives in the hearts and minds of consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005), so it is imperative for sport managers to aid consumers’ development of positive brand associations in order to create new and leverage existing brand equity. The intangible nature of spectator sport is a key reason for relying on brand equity to develop relationships with fans. Fans do not receive anything tangible when they watch (in person or via media) a sporting event. They are left with only their memories, perceptions, and attitudes. Put another way, the brand equity that exists in each consumer is the only thing he or she keeps. “Due to its intangible, inconsistent and perishable nature, the sport consumption experience is nothing but a perception of the association with a particular sport entity” (Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998, p. 5). Gladden, Milne, and Sutton (1998) proposed a framework of brand equity in Division I college athletics. In their framework, the authors note the cyclical nature of brand equity and its outcomes. An increase in market-level outcomes such as national media exposure or ticket sales can impact the consumer’s brand equity, by creating brand awareness or deepening brand associations. Their framework provides sport management with a starting point for research on brand equity in the collegiate sport setting.

Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) investigated brand equity in German professional soccer. The authors proposed the Brand Equity in Team Sport (BETS) model as a way to estimate the impact of brand equity on the economic success of soccer teams. The authors found that “brand equity has a positive effect on purchase intention, price premiums and brand loyalty” (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005, p. 509). This supports previous research that identifies these (purchase intention, price premiums and brand loyalty) as potential outcomes of brand equity. Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005)
were also “able to demonstrate that brand equity rather than athletic success has a high and significant effect on economic success” (p. 509), thus supporting Gladden and Milne’s (1999) earlier findings, and emphasizing the important role that brand equity plays in the success of sports organizations. Understanding brand equity can “allow sport managers to increase the image, awareness, and revenues of their teams and programs” (Gladden, Milne & Sutton, 1998, p.2).

RELATED SPORT CONCEPTS: FAN IDENTIFICATION & COMMITMENT

In the sport management literature, brand equity research has only recently begun. Other concepts like fan identification and psychological commitment have been investigated to help explain and understand how and why sport consumers are attached to certain teams and what they want to get out of the spectator sport experience. There are similarities between these concepts and concepts related to brand equity. Wann and Branscombe (1993) define fan identification as the level of attachment or concern an individual has toward a sports team. The authors developed a scale that is able to measure and classify individual’s level of fan identification (high, moderate, low). The level of fan identification is important to sport managers because it is a predictor of how much money and time people are willing to spend to see their team play; highly identified fans are also more likely to feel positively about the team’s past and future performances than fans with moderate or level levels of identification. Many people readily identify with a particular sports team; this gives them a sense of belonging to a particular group, as well as enhances their self-esteem and reduces the likelihood of depression (Branscombe & Wann, 1991).
Loyalty is described as being a two-dimensional construct – consisting of behavior and attitude. As previously mentioned, measuring loyalty simply by looking at behavior (purchase rates, purchase intentions) is not capturing just loyalty; there may be alternative explanations for those behaviors (habit, inertia, lack of available alternatives, etc.). It also does not allow the researcher to identify different levels of loyalty (or how loyal the consumer actually is). However, measuring an individual’s commitment level allows the researcher to assess consumers’ attitudinal loyalty. Psychological commitment is a resistance to changing one’s preference in response to conflicting information or experience (Crosby & Taylor, 1983). Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard (2000) developed the Psychological Commitment to Team (PCT) Scale, which assesses an individual’s commitment to sport teams. This psychological commitment can also be considered attitudinal loyalty. The authors suggest that fans who are loyal to a sports team “possess an attitudinal bias that is both resistant to change and persistent over time” (Mahony et al., 2000, p. 18). In the marketing and branding literature, brand loyalty has been identified as an outcome of brand equity. Raggio and Leone (2005) suggest that an individual-level outcome of brand equity is a more positive response to uncertainty (in information or experience) than those with weaker brand equity, similar to the definition of psychological commitment. Raggio and Leone (2005) also suggest that a market-level outcome of brand equity is loyalty. In this context, psychological commitment and loyalty can be viewed as outcomes of brand equity.

Sport spectators and fans, in particular, want to associate themselves with success, which enhances their self-esteem. Fan identification and commitment allows researchers to understand the attachment that many fans have for their favorite teams. Fan
identification stems from social identity theory and much of the previous work on
identification and commitment in sports has been viewed from a sociological and/or
psychological perspective. Brand equity attempts to understand consumer behavior
through a marketing perspective. These concepts are important elements in the
discussion of brand equity. Psychological commitment and team loyalty, as discussed in
the sport management literature, can be considered individual- and market-level
outcomes of brand equity.

Research in brand equity in sports acknowledges that identification plays a key
role in the strength of a team’s brand equity. In fact, Gladden and Funk (2002) identify
fan identification as one of the key dimensions of brand associations, which collectively
make up a consumer’s brand equity. In their research on consumers psychological
attachment to an expansion Major League Baseball team that had yet to play a single
game, James, Kolbe, and Trail (2002) found that consumers can and do develop a
psychological connection to a team without any direct game experiences. The subjects in
this study could not have identified with the team because they were not a proven winner
since they had yet to play a game, but many were considered to have high levels of
identification. The subjects also had very little experience upon which to base their
connection to the team, but that connection developed anyway.

The authors’ findings indicate that “connection to the team was achieved via
mechanisms other than attending or viewing games” (James, Kolbe, & Trail, 2002, p.
222). It seems that these subjects had developed some strong, positive and unique
associations with the team through alternative channels before they had even played a
game. It could be that this new team had developed brand equity among some of the
members of the community; and they were leveraging this brand equity because consumers were choosing to purchase season tickets without having yet experienced a game.

Because sports teams are different from a typical consumer product, it can be difficult to recognize that brand equity is not just another term for fan identification or team loyalty. Identification has been recognized as a particular brand association, but it is not the only one. Essentially, a consumer who is a highly identified fan is most likely going to have strong brand equity for that team because they will have other strong, favorable and unique associations with the team (e.g., the stadium, the atmosphere, the history, the coach, the logo, etc.), but that doesn’t mean that brand equity is just another way to measure identification. In college football, a highly identified fan of the Ohio State Buckeyes is likely going to have strong brand equity for that team. He or she is probably not going to be a highly identified fan of the Buckeyes rival, the Michigan Wolverines. This consumer, though, can still have brand equity for that team because they have strong, positive, unique associations (other than identification) with that team: they are successful, they are respectable, they have good coaches, they are a Big Ten conference team, or whatever the consumer’s associations might be. It would be assumed that this consumer’s brand equity for Michigan would not be as high as the brand equity for Ohio State, but it may be higher than the brand equity for some of the other competition (e.g., Indiana, Marshall, San Diego State, etc.) because the consumer won’t have as many, or as strong, favorable or unique, associations with that team.

Identification and commitment are important concepts in sport management literature and in the study of brand equity in team sport, but they are in fact different from
brand equity. Not all consumers of team sport are highly or even moderately identified with the team, but they can still hold strong brand equity for that team because they enjoy the entertainment or the athletics or the coach or a number of other reasons. Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard (2002) even note, “it is important to recognize that not all who watch or attend sporting events are fans committed to the teams they view” (p. 15). In the consumer products market a consumer who has an emotional connection to Apple computers will probably have strong brand equity for Apple. That identification and connection to Apple will add to the strong, positive, unique associations that he or she has for the brand. However, a consumer who has no emotional connection to Apple (and perhaps has never even used an Apple product) can still have strong brand equity for Apple because he or she holds other strong, positive, unique associations with the brand. Consumers can hold strong brand equity for a team that they’ve never seen play or for a team that they don’t really care deeply about, but always have fun when they go to the games. There are a myriad of reasons why one could have strong, favorable and unique associations with a team brand. Brand equity research investigates what impact these associations as a whole have on consumers’ perceptions of the brand.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Professional and collegiate sport is big business. In 1995, sport was considered the 11\textsuperscript{th} largest industry in the United States, estimated to be worth nearly $152 billion, which was more than double the size of the automobile industry (Meek, 1997). Consumers spent an estimated $5.3 billion dollars on admission to various spectator sports (Meek, 1997). Collegiate sport represents a large portion of this industry. Billions of dollars are spent by television networks in order to broadcast collegiate football and
basketball games, and the licensing of collegiate merchandise is itself a $3.5 billion industry (Turner, 2005). In order to attract and retain fans, corporate sponsors, and media outlets, sport organizations must successfully provide an excellent product. Building and leveraging brand equity can be the key to that success. Utilizing brand equity is a long term strategy that can reduce the reliance on volatile, short-term measures like wins and losses. Much of the branding literature touts the importance of brand equity, but few studies have measured true brand equity, instead relying on market-level outcomes as proxies for brand equity.

Sport management research has begun investigating brand equity, but most of these studies have used outcome measures as proxies (e.g., Robinson and Miller, 2003). Another problem with measuring true brand equity is that there is a lack of one generally accepted measure. This gives rise to different ways to operationalize and measure brand equity, thereby creating a tenuous theoretical foundation (Raggio & Leone, 2005). However, Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt’s (2005) BETS model may provide a solid measure of consumer-based brand equity in the sports setting. It is supposed that leveraging brand equity will lead to certain individual and market level outcomes, but without a measure of true brand equity (rather than the outcomes themselves) there has been little empirical support of this proposition.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

In name, brand equity has been studied frequently, but these studies are often actually researching other concepts like brand value, brand loyalty, and other market-level outcomes. The purpose of this study was to test Raggio and Leone’s (2005) proposed theory on brand equity by measuring consumers’ brand equity for a collegiate
athletic team. The authors define brand equity as “the attitude, perception, belief or desire that a brand will meet its promise of value” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 26-27). Given this definition, stronger brand equity should result in more positive, biased processing of information, persistent attitudes that are resistant to change, and behaviors that are influenced by those beliefs. Raggio and Leone (2005) support Keller’s (1993, 1998) model that brand equity comes from consumers’ brand knowledge. They propose that brand equity cannot be measured using potential outcomes, so it is vital that the actual dimensions of brand equity (i.e., brand awareness and associations) are measured at the individual level in order to gauge true brand equity. The consumer processes his/her brand knowledge (made up of his/her brand awareness and brand associations) which elicits individual behaviors.

However, Raggio and Leone (2005) note that brand equity can be difficult to measure, even at the individual level because other factors could be included, such as habit or inertia. The authors propose that these elements affect brand decisions less when the consumer is faced with situations of brand uncertainty. For example, when a consumer has recently heard negative (or positive) reports on a particular brand, that consumer may have to re-think their use (or lack of use) of that brand, so the brand equity he or she holds for the particular brand becomes activated. This activation will allow for a more accurate measure of brand equity. By measuring consumers’ brand equity for a collegiate athletic team in Division I, this study aimed to test Raggio and Leone’s (2005) proposed theory on consumer-based brand equity and provide support for using brand equity principles in collegiate athletics.
The second purpose of this proposed study was to gain an understanding of the impact of situations of brand uncertainty on a consumer’s brand equity. Raggio and Leone’s (2005) brand equity framework describes individual-level outcomes of brand equity, which include more positive responses to the following situations: changes in personal or usage context, product changes, product harm crises, new competition, word of mouth, brand extensions and out-of-stock situations. By exposing consumers to two of these types of situations which occur frequently in sports (product changes and word of mouth), this study intended to determine if, in fact, more positive responses can be seen among consumers with stronger brand equity. This study measured the brand awareness and brand associations that make up brand equity at the individual level in order to eliminate many of the problems outlined by Raggio and Leone (2005) that occur when using market-level outcomes as a proxy for brand equity.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Raggio and Leone (2005) propose that a true measure of brand equity is easier to attain when consumers are faced with brand uncertainty situations because the brand equity is activated. It is important to test if measuring brand equity is easier when consumers are faced with brand uncertainty situations. This lead to the following hypothesis:

_Hypothesis 1:_ The control groups’ posttest scores will not change significantly from their pretest scores on the brand equity measure because their brand equity is not being activated.

Much of the research on branding has proposed that stronger brand equity has many advantages, including consumers’ positive response to change in usage context,
product changes, product harm crises, new competition, brand extensions, claims made by a competitor, word-of-mouth, and out-of-stock situations (Raggio & Leone, 2005). Raggio and Leone (2005) indicate that brand equity results in biased processing of information and brand beliefs that are resistant to change; the stronger the consumer’s brand equity, the more resistant to change those beliefs are. Given the preceding, this study proposed the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 2:* Scores on the posttest brand equity measure will be significantly more affected (positively or negatively) by brand uncertainty situations for those who have lower initial levels of brand equity than those with higher levels.

In short, this study investigated the effects of brand uncertainty situations on the brand equity that consumers hold for a college football team. A model of this study is presented in Figure 1.2.

**JUSTIFICATION OF STUDY**

As mentioned previously, college athletics is big business. Athletic departments around the country, at all Division levels, are searching for ways to attract and retain customers to ensure that revenues can grow at the same rate as expenses. The brand equity literature suggests that by developing a strong brand and finding ways to make that brand have meaning for consumers, athletic departments will put themselves in a position to attract and retain consumers. Understanding if these strategies do have an impact on consumers is vital to the adoption and continued use of these tactics. While the use and importance of branding principles has been widely discussed both in the academic and popular press, it is important for researchers to continue to empirically study them to ensure that what is being written is based on, and supported by, empirical research. The
Figure 1.2: Illustrative description of the study
topic of brand equity, which originated in the business and marketing literature, has since crossed over into many different domains including sport management. This study provides insight into the use of such principles in the sport management realm.

SIGNIFICANCE

The management of branding and brand equity in particular has been touted as an essential strategy for organizations to develop relationships with consumers, which can lead to increased loyalty, profits, market share, and even competitive advantage. If sport organizations are to utilize such a strategy, they should understand the benefits it can provide. This study helps clarify the role that brand equity plays in consumers’ decision-making processes.

The general marketing literature on branding has suffered from a lack of a solid theoretical basis for the study of brand equity. This study tested Raggio and Leone’s (2005) proposed theory on brand equity, which furthers the theoretical underpinnings of brand equity by demonstrating that brand equity can be measured at the individual level without using outcome measures. In addition, the theoretical foundation of brand equity suffers because there is no single, clear approach to the measurement of brand equity in the current literature. The use of an instrument that does not rely on outcome measures as a proxy for brand equity was a significant step toward a single approach – measuring the components that make up brand equity at the individual level, rather than outcomes at the market level. Also, this study provides further justification for using the BETS instrument in order to measure a team’s brand equity.

For marketers, the results of this study advance the understanding of what situations can “activate” brand equity in the minds of consumers and the impact of such
activation on consumers’ decision-making. Raggio and Leone (2005) suggests situations in which this activation may occur, but it has not been empirically investigated. In team sport, especially, understanding if brand uncertainty situations can activate consumers’ brand equity can advance our understanding of how best to develop and leverage it. This is incredibly important for sport marketers who often have little to no say in how the product is assembled and are unable to control many different aspects of the brand, but are still expected to develop a strong brand to which consumers can relate. We know that these uncertainty situations (positive or negative word of mouth; the emergence or loss of a star player, etc.) occur frequently in sports, so it is beneficial for marketers to understand how much these situations impact the team’s brand equity. Often these situations are difficult to control, but the results can provide some guidance for marketers in outlining how best to manage such situations and to which types of fans the marketing and public relations efforts should be directed. For example if, as Hypothesis 2 suggests, consumers with weaker brand equity are able to be swayed positively because of the emergence of a star player, marketers can devise a campaign touting new stars aimed at those types of consumers. Similarly, if a team brand is faced with negative word of mouth, the marketing and public relations staff may need to focus on efforts to counter that aimed at the consumers with weaker brand equity because those with stronger brand equity will be more resistant to that negative information.

LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Using a pretest/posttest control group experimental design for this study reduced many of the limitations. However, the major limitation involves the mortality of the subjects. Because of the experimental design, the number of subjects is relatively small.
so if any subjects drop out, it could have an impact on the results. The data collection occurred at two different times, so there were some subjects who did not complete the second portion of the experiment.

The delimitations for this study include the use of a convenience sample. While random selection would be ideal, it was not possible in this instance. However, all subjects were randomly assigned to the treatment levels, so this delimitation is mitigated. Another delimitation regarding the subjects is that they are all college students, which limits generalizability to the general population. The use of fictional scenarios is a limitation because they are not naturally occurring outside of the experiment, but they allow for maximum control of the variable and represent events that can and do occur in the real world. The final delimitation of this study is that the use of a college football team limits the generalizability of the results to other college sports or professional sports.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Below is a list of terms and definitions that are used in this study.

*Brand Equity*: Brand equity is an individual consumer’s “attitude, perception, belief or desire that a brand will meet its promise of value” (Raggio and Leone, 2005, p. 26-27). It is what the brand means to the consumer. It resides in the hearts and minds of consumers (Keller, 1993, 1998; Raggio & Leone, 2005). In this study, consumers are divided into two categories – strong brand equity and weak brand equity.

*Brand*: The logo, name, symbol, design or any combination of these that communicates attributes, benefits, emotions, attitudes, and even values of the specific
product or service being offered to consumers (Keller, 1993, 1998; deChernatony & Dall’Olmo, 1998).

*Brand Knowledge:* Brand knowledge consists of “a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). It is all the information about a particular brand that is stored in a consumer’s memory, including all descriptive and evaluative information (Keller, 2003).

*Brand Image:* Brand image is the brand’s current set of associations (in the consumer’s mind), or how the brand is seen by consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Aaker, 1996; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986; Raggio & Leone, 2005).

*Brand Identity:* “Brand identity is the visual and verbal expression of a brand. Identity supports, expresses, communicates, synthesizes, and visualizes the brand” (Wheeler, 2003, p. 4). Brand identity components include the logo, symbol, design, colors, and/or sounds that make up the brand. It how the firm wants the brand to be perceived; it is “aspirational” (Aaker, 1996).

*Brand Associations:* A brand association is “anything that connects the customer to the brand. It can include user imagery, product attributes, use situations, organizational associations, brand personality, and symbols” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 17). There are three types of brand associations: attributes, benefits, and attitudes (Keller, 1993). Brand associations, collectively, make up the meaning of the brand in the minds of consumers (the brand image) (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 1998).

*Brand Awareness:* Brand awareness is the consumer’s ability to recognize and/or recall a brand (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). Brand awareness consists of a consumer’s
ability to recognize the brand in question (with prompting) and the extent to which consumers are familiar with the brand (e.g., consumer’s ability to recall the brand without prompting).

*Brand Uncertainty Situations:* A brand uncertainty situation is a situation in which a consumer is forced to think about his or her feelings or perceptions of a brand, the brand equity. These brand uncertainty situations allow a consumer’s brand equity to become “activated” and force them to re-evaluate their perceptions about the brand and its ability to meet its promise of value. Examples of brand uncertainty situations include: changes in individual’s personal or usage situation, introduction of a new brand into a category, changes (positive or negative) to an existing product, brand extensions, product harm crises, claims made by a competitor, word of mouth, and out-of-stock situations (Raggio & Leone, 2005).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

BRANDING

Branding and the function of brands has long been a topic of discussion in boardrooms and classrooms. The concepts have evolved and been reviewed and redefined continually. In discussing brand equity and branding, it is important to first understand what a brand is. There are several different definitions. A brand can be defined as “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, that identifies the maker or seller of a product or service” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001, p. 301). The American Marketing Association (2005, para. 2) provides a similar definition, a brand is a “name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers.” In fact, the AMA’s definition for a brand has not changed since 1960 (deChernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998). These definitions highlight the belief that a brand is what makes one product (or service) different from another product (or service).

In a thorough content analysis, deChernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) identified 12 themes in the various definitions of a brand found in the literature; they are the brand as: legal instrument, logo, company, shorthand, risk reducer, identity system, image in consumers’ minds, value system, personality, relationship, adding value, and
evolving entity. These themes are not mutually exclusive and do have some overlap because the brand is a multidimensional construct. The number of themes illustrates that having a single definition for the concept of a brand is difficult. After the literature analysis, deChernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) interviewed 20 leading edge brand consultants, and found their definitions were as varied as the academicians. The expert definitions were similar to the themes in the literature and usually varied based on the emphasis on the tangible or intangible aspects of the brand. “Underpinning the majority of the experts’ definitions is the notion of brands as value systems, personality and image which is consistent with the most recent branding literature” (deChernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 437). In their research, deChernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley (1998) found “a shift in emphasis from a notion of brands as logos to a more integrated view as the matching of a firm’s functional and emotional values with the performance and psychosocial values sought by consumers” (p. 413).

As deChernatony and Dall’Olmo Riley’s (1998) research illustrates, older definitions of the brand indicate that it was viewed mainly as an attribute, or just a part of the product being offered. It was just the name or logo that separated it from its competitors. Today, however, brands are considered much more than just a name or logo, more than an attribute, even more than the product itself; brands represent emotions, attitudes, and values, and sometimes even whole lifestyles. “A brand is a person’s gut feeling about a product, service or company” (Neumeier, 2003, p. 2). The concept of a brand today incorporates all that the product or service is offering, including how it makes consumers think and feel. A brand is a promise of value to consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005). A company makes promises about the benefits and values of a product or
service and the consumers decide whether or not those promises are fulfilled, and this evaluation contributes to brand equity. Branding is becoming increasingly important, and popular, “because as our society has moved from an economy of mass production to an economy of mass customization, our purchase choices have multiplied. We’ve become information-rich and time-poor” (Neumeier, 2003, p. 8). There is a desire to make quicker decisions when purchasing goods or services, but consumers have so many more choices. Brands become something of a short-cut for consumers; they help consumers understand the products or services under consideration. “A brand is a perceptual entity, rooted in reality, but also reflecting the perceptions and perhaps even idiosyncrasies of consumers” (Keller, 1998, p. 10). It is important to realize that to brand something is to teach consumers how to identify a product or service. “The key to branding is that consumers perceive differences among brands” (Keller, 1998, p. 10) so that the brand establishes a unique place in the consumers’ minds.

A brand is arguably a company’s most powerful asset, yet it is intangible. To the consumer, the brand consists of images, perceptions, beliefs, etc., of what the brand is, what it does, what it feels like to own it or use it. The brand’s intangible aspects are “essential constituents of the brand construct” (deChernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 434). These intangible elements are what connect the brand to consumers. Good brands can make emotional bonds with its consumers. “People fall in love with brands. They trust them, develop strong loyalties, buy them, and believe in their superiority” (Wheeler, 2003, p. 2). These consumer-brand relationships develop over time and must be cultivated by both parties. In part, branding is challenging because the organization does not have complete control of the brand. “Brands are co-produced by firms and
consumers” (deChernatony & Dall’Olmo Riley, 1998, p. 436). Neumeier (2003) notes that everyone creates his or her own interpretation of a brand; “while companies can’t control this process, they can influence it by communicating the qualities” (p. 2) that separate one brand from another. In short, companies may own them, but brands live in the hearts and minds of its consumers and potential consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005).

**BRAND MANAGEMENT**

Brand management is the practice of building and maintaining successful brands. With growing competition and decreasing profits in today’s market place, companies are turning to brand management as a marketing strategy that may sustain them in the long run. Brand management has become extremely important in the past few years, both in academic literature and in practice (Keller, 2001b). Joachimsthaler and Aaker (1997) note that “companies must build strong brands to be competitive” (p. 39). They cannot simply rely on mass media advertising and traditional means of marketing goods and services. The focus needs to be on building and managing strong brands. Even brand management itself has undergone changes (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The classical model for brand management included a brand management team, headed by a low-to-mid level manager, focused on short-term results of single brands. Their main objective was coordination with the other departments; this model was reactive and tactical, rather than strategic and visionary (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

The current model of brand management is much more farsighted, and is often referred to as brand leadership to indicate that it goes beyond simply managing a brand. It takes a long-term approach to brand building and brand performance. The goal is to develop and maintain a consistent brand identity that communicates the core values of the
brand and the company to consumers. The brand manager is in a higher position in the organization (usually the top marketing executive), and is a strategist and team leader. In addition, everyone from the CEO and president on down the corporate hierarchy plays some role in the successful management of the brand. The communication focus is not simply external (directed only at the consumers), but is internal (directed at all members of the organization) as well. The entire organization is aware of the brand management strategy, which is driven by brand identity and creating brand value, and works to make the strategy successful.

The classical model of brand management focuses on sales and market share, which are mainly short-term indicators. The brand leadership model of brand management focuses on brand identity, which can lead to a long-term sustained competitive advantage. Another key change in the new brand leadership model is the shift from a limited to a broad focus. The classical model had the brand manager focusing only on one product (or service) and one market, which could lead to myopia, cannibalization among an organization’s multiple brands, and duplication of efforts for the same product in different markets.

The new model takes a broader approach, with multiple brands coordinating their efforts within a global perspective. Brand management has become a strategic, long-term approach to help organizations create and sustain a competitive advantage (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The organization communicates the brand identity internally so that members understand the brand, and externally to consumers in order to develop strong positive brand associations, which are components of strong brand equity. Understanding how to create, sustain, measure and leverage brand equity is the guiding
principle of brand management (Keller, 1998). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) note, “the goal of brand leadership is to build brand equities, rather than simply manage brand images” (p. 9).

**BRAND EQUITY**

Brand equity has been defined in several ways. The common theme in the definitions is that brand equity is the relative strength of an organization’s name and image (the brand) in the marketplace. Farquhar (1989) defines brand equity as “the ‘added value’ with which a given brand endows a product” (p. 24). Using Aaker’s (1991) model, Kotler and Armstrong (2001) define brand equity as “the value of a brand, based on the extent to which it has high brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, strong brand associations, and other assets such as patents, trademarks, and channel relationships” (p. 302).

According to Aaker (1991), brand equity is a set of assets that include brand awareness, loyal customers, perceived quality, brand associations, and other assets. Aaker (1991) introduces a theoretical model (see Appendix A) that shows brand equity consisting of these five components, which create value, including competitive advantage, for the firm as well as the customer. Keller (1993), reflecting the concept that brands live in the minds of consumers, introduced a conceptual model of brand equity (see Appendix B) from the individual consumer perspective. “Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993, p. 8). Keller (1993) suggests that brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image. Before continuing the
discussion on what brand equity is and why it is important, it is imperative to first define and discuss the various elements that are associated with brand equity.

BRAND KNOWLEDGE

Brand knowledge is the consumer’s personal knowledge about a brand. It consists of “a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations are linked” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). This knowledge is extremely important in consumer decision making because it influences “what comes to mind when a consumer thinks about a brand – for example, in response to marketing activity for that brand” (Keller, 1993, p. 2). Raggio and Leone (2005) indicate that environmental factors influence consumers’ brand knowledge. These environmental factors include brand-related marketing efforts, consumer experience with the brand, and secondary brand information (word-of-mouth, etc.). In general, brand knowledge is the “personal meaning about a brand stored in consumer memory, that is, all descriptive and evaluative brand-related information” (Keller, 2003, p. 596).

When new information is being encoded or when internal information is being retrieved from memory, a node can become a source of activation, which can spread to other nodes. If that activation is above a threshold level, the information is recalled. Therefore, the strength of the associations among the activated nodes determines what information is retrieved. For example, if a consumer is thinking about buying athletic shoes, Nike may be considered because of its strong association with the product category. The consumer’s brand knowledge that is strongly linked to Nike will come to mind, including product features and benefits, perceptions of the quality of the shoes, as well as images from advertising campaigns, celebrity endorsers, or past experiences.
It is important to note that brand knowledge consists of two elements. “The relevant dimensions that distinguish brand knowledge and affect consumer response are the awareness of the brand (in terms of brand recall and recognition) and the favorability, strength, and uniqueness of the brand associations in consumer memory” (Keller, 1993, p. 3). This means, according to Keller (1993), that brand awareness and brand associations are the key facets of brand knowledge (see Appendix B). Keller (2003) remarks that there are many different kinds of information that can become linked to brands in consumers’ minds, including: awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences. Marketing activities can affect one or more of these elements in order to create brand knowledge, and in turn, consumer response can affect marketing activities. “By creating differential consumer responses and affecting the success of brand-building marketing programs, brand knowledge is the source of brand equity” (Keller, 2003, p. 596).

BRAND AWARENESS

Brand awareness is necessary for brand equity to exist in any product or service. This component is common to both Aaker’s (1991) and Keller’s (1993) models of brand equity, and refers to how easily and likely consumers are to recall a brand name. Aaker (1991) conceives of brand awareness as the anchor to which other associations can be attached. Brand awareness is the first step in developing brand equity because it influences the development and depth of brand associations. Consumers cannot choose a product or service if they are not aware of the brand in the first place. Brand awareness can affect consumer perceptions. People are comforted by the familiar and have a tendency to “attribute all sorts of good attitudes to items that are familiar to them” (Aaker
Firms create brand awareness by repeatedly exposing consumers to the brand in order to increase familiarity with it (Keller, 1998).

Brand awareness is composed of consumer abilities to recognize and recall brands. Brand recognition is a consumer’s ability to identify the brand after being exposed to it. Brand recall refers to a consumer’s ability to identify the brand without prompting. Consumers can generate the brand from memory. Brand awareness plays a significant role in decision making for several reasons. Obviously, consumers must be able to think of the brand when they think about the product category. This awareness increases the chances that the brand will become a member of the consideration set, the group of brands from which the consumer will chose. Consumers tend to buy brands with which they are familiar, even if they have no other brand associations. This means that a consumer’s awareness of a certain brand, even if they do not really know anything about the product (or service), increases the likelihood that the brand will be purchased. This may be especially true when dealing with low involvement products (Keller, 1993). Finally, brand awareness can influence the formation and strength of brand associations. For consumers to have an image of a brand, they must first be aware of the brand. A brand node (brand awareness) must be established in memory before there is generation of a brand image (Keller, 1993).

BRAND IMAGE

Brand image has been a significant concept in marketing for decades (e.g., Gardner & Levy, 1955), but like many other branding constructs, it does not have one unified definition. Generally, brand image is the brand’s current set of associations, or how the brand is seen by consumers (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Aaker, 1996; Park,
Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986; Raggio & Leone, 2005). Keller (1993) defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory” (p. 3). The brand image, while being perceptions held by consumers, is not simply an accumulation of marketing messages; brand image is derived from the totality of all brand-related activities by the firm, as well as word-of-mouth, direct experience, and the brand’s link to other entities (e.g., people like endorsers and employees; things like events and causes; places such as country of origin and distribution channels; and other brands, such as brand extensions, the company, ingredients, and alliances). “Any potential encounter with a brand – marketing initiated or not – has the opportunity to change the mental representation of the brand and the kinds of information that can appear in consumer memory” (Keller, 2003, p. 597).

According to Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986), brand image can have a major impact on the brand’s market performance by helping to establish the brand’s position as well as insulating the brand from competition. A consistent brand image is a key to building successful brands (Aaker, 1996; Farquhar, 1989). “Consistency of the brand’s image is part of managing the relationship between the consumer and the brand” (Farquhar, 1989, p. 29). Consistency allows consumers to solidify the image. The longer the image is retained, the harder it can be to change. The consumer-brand relationship is extremely important to successful brands. Some brands and their consumers develop very close relationships, and the consumers actually develop emotional attachments to the brand (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). If a brand image is not consistent, these types of strong relationships cannot develop because the consumer is less sure of what the brand is and what he or she will get from it. An organization’s brand image should be
consistent, strong, favorable, and unique in order to distinguish its brand in a crowded market place, regardless of product or service category. Every brand image is made up of consumers’ associations with the brand.

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

A brand association is “anything that connects the customer to the brand. It can include user imagery, product attributes, use situations, organizational associations, brand personality, and symbols” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 17). Brand associations, collectively, make up the meaning of the brand in the minds of consumers (the brand image) (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993, 1998). Brand associations are at the heart of brand equity, and as such, a key element for a competitive advantage. Taken as a whole, these associations create the brand image. They are also the drivers for a brand’s identity – the image that they want the consumers to have (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Brand managers attempt to generate and control brand associations through their marketing activities and communications with the consumers in order to create and maintain a consistent, positive brand identity. Brand associations help consumers process and retrieve information, and find a reason to buy the brand; they create positive attitudes and feelings toward the brand. They can also help successfully introduce and manage extensions to the brand’s product or service offering (Aaker, 1991).

According to Keller’s (1993) model of brand knowledge, brand associations can be characterized by their level of abstraction. “Brand associations can be classified into three major categories of increasing scope: attributes, benefits, and attitudes” (Keller, 1993, p. 4). These categories can be further broken down. For example, attributes,
which are descriptive features of a product or service, include product related attributes and non-product-related attributes. Product related attributes are those characteristics that are necessary to the performance of the product or service. For example, a product related attribute for dandruff shampoo is that it actually stops dandruff. Non-product related attributes are the “external aspects of the product or service that relate to its purchase or consumption” (Keller, 1993, p. 4). These attributes may impact the consumption process, but do not affect performance. These include price, packaging, user imagery (i.e., what type of person uses the product or service), usage imagery (i.e., where and in what types of situations the product or service is used), feelings and experiences, and brand personality (Keller, 1998). Price is an important attribute because consumers often make a connection between price and value of the brand, and these associations may help organize brands into price tiers, which may make decision-making easier for the consumer.

“User and usage imagery attributes can be formed directly from a consumer’s own experiences and contact with brand users or indirectly through the depiction of the target market and usage situation as communicated in brand advertising or by some other source of information (i.e., word-of-mouth)” (Keller, 1998, p. 95). Consumers may develop user associations based on demographic (e.g., gender, age, race, income) and psychographic information (e.g., attitudes on career, social issues, political issues, possessions). For example, Pepsi is generally seen as a soft drink consumed by younger people, and Rolex watches are associated with the wealthy. Usage associations include time of day, week or year, the location, or the type of activity with which the product or service is connected. For example, the advertising for Range Rover vehicles emphasizes
how the SUVs can be taken off-road and used in all kinds of weather conditions.

Whereas the Lincoln Navigator, also a sport utility vehicle, is advertised as a vehicle for when one wants to travel in luxury. Feelings and experiences can help consumers form very strong associations. With direct or indirect (word of mouth) experience, consumers develop perceptions about what it feels like to use the product or service. Emotional associations with brands are a key component of brand equity. “The feelings associated with a brand and the emotions they evoke can become so strongly associated that they are accessible during product consumption or use” (Keller, 1998, p. 96). For example, Apple is often cited as a brand that has an emotional connection with its consumers. Apple seeks to instill a sense of freedom in their users and when consumers use their iPod or iMac, they feel that emotion. Also, Apple users are very devoted and have a sense being a part of the brand’s family so when they use their Apple products, they are filled with that feeling of being part of that community (Kahney, 2002). In addition to cultivating feelings and emotions, brands can also develop personalities. Brands with personality are able to encourage consumers to form relationships because they feel like the brand is a person (Keller, 1998). For example, Harley Davidson has a personality as being “tough,” “rebellious,” “non-conforming.” Consumers with these associations who identify with that type of personality are more likely to develop a relationship with Harley Davidson. User imagery is often a prime source of personality.

“Benefits are the personal value consumers attach to the product or service attributes – that is, what consumers think the product or service can do for them” (Keller, 1993, p. 4). Different types of benefits can be thought of in terms of the underlying motivations: functional benefits, symbolic benefits, and experiential benefits (Keller,
1993, 1998). Functional benefits are generally the intrinsic advantages of consumption, and are usually associated with product related attributes. They are often linked to physiological and safety needs and involve solving or avoiding a problem. For example, the functional benefits of a Volvo automobile include reliability and safety. Symbolic benefits are extrinsic advantages of consumption, and are often associated with non-product related attributes, including user imagery. Symbolic benefits include meeting needs for social acceptance, personal expression, and self-image. Some consumers value the popularity, prestige, or exclusivity of a brand because of the image it projects to others (Keller, 1998). Jaguar, Tiffany, and Rolex are examples of brands that provide symbolic benefits to consumers (Keller, 1998). “Experiential benefits relate to what it feels like to use the product or service and can correspond to both product-related attributes as well as non-product-related attributes… These benefits satisfy experiential needs such as sensory pleasure (sight, taste, sound, smell, or feel), variety, and cognitive stimulation (Keller, 1998, p. 100). For example, some consumers may receive experiential benefits from wearing Nike shoes because they feel more athletic.

Brand attitudes are the most abstract type of association; they are consumers’ overall evaluation of a brand. They are important because they frequently form the basis for behavior, such as choosing a particular brand (Keller, 1998). Brand attitudes may vary in terms of strength and favorability of the brand, often based on consumer perceptions of attributes and benefits. Attitudes formed through direct experience tend to be more accessible than attitudes based on information or indirect forms of behavior, which makes them more likely to be activated when the consumer is exposed to the brand or making brand choices. Brand attitudes also tend to be more durable and accessible in
memory than associations based on attributes. “Because of the embedded meaning that
they contain, abstract associations such as attitudes, or even benefits to some extent, tend
to be inherently more evaluative than attributes” (Keller, 1998, p. 102). This evaluative
quality makes brand attitudes very important when discussing brand associations, and
ultimately, brand equity.

“To create brand equity, it is important that the brand have some strong,
favorable, and unique brand associations in that order” (Keller, 1998, p. 102). A unique
association is worthless unless it is favorable, and positive associations do not matter if
the consumer cannot recall them. Strong brand associations refer to the connection of the
association to the node. If an association is not strong, the consumer is not likely to
retrieve it or maintain it over any length of time. The strength of an association depends
on how it is encoded and how it is stored within the memory. The quantity and quality of
information processing at the time of encoding also helps determine the strength of the
association. Quantity refers to how much a person thinks about the information when
they are processing it. Quality refers to the manner in which a person thinks about the
information.

Direct experience with the brand tends to lead to stronger associations, followed
by word-of-mouth, and information from neutral sources (consumer reports, popular
press, etc.). “Company-influenced sources of information such as advertising are often
likely to create the weakest associations and thus may be the most easily changed”
(Keller, 1998, p. 103). This means that much of the brand associations that consumers
hold are not controlled by the company. Understanding a brand’s associations is vital to
the success of the brand because much of what forms a consumer’s perception of a brand
is not traditional advertising. It emphasizes how important direct contact with consumers through a variety of ways (product usage, packaging, staff, sponsorships, public relations, etc.) is for a brand.

Brands can differ based on how positively the associations are evaluated. If consumers perceive a brand to have the attributes and benefits that they seek, they will develop a positive overall brand attitude. The favorability of the associations depends on how desirable the attributes or benefits are, as well as the brand’s ability to deliver the attribute or benefit. A brand manager cannot really create a favorable brand association for an attribute that is unimportant. For example, a shampoo might claim to eliminate dandruff, but if a consumer doesn’t have dandruff, the association will not be meaningful. Similarly, if a consumer does have dandruff, that shampoo’s claim might be very important, but if the brand does not actually eliminate his dandruff, the association formed is not favorable.

Brand associations may be unique, but they may also be shared with other competing brands. These shared associations allow consumers to identify category membership and define the scope of competition. Certain associations may even be considered essential to all brands in certain categories (e.g., a bank should provide access to ATMs). A brand that shares associations may be thought of as “prototypical” or an “exemplar” of a product or service category (Keller, 1998). However, a sustainable competitive advantage requires a firm to have rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). Unique brand associations can serve as such a resource. They give the consumer a reason to buy a particular brand over the competition. These unique propositions may be built on product-related or non-product-
related attributes or functional, symbolic, or experiential benefits. Often, non-product-related attributes like user type or usage situation create unique associations more easily (Keller, 1998).

“The presence of strongly held, favorably evaluated associations that are unique to the brand and imply superiority over other brands is critical to a brand’s success” (Keller, 1993, p. 6). Another key to a brand’s success is the congruence of brand associations, meaning how much one brand association share in terms of content and meaning with another association. For example, Nike’s brand associations are likely to be focused on athletic excellence and quality athletic shoes and apparel, and this is congruent with the associations they try to instill through a marketing strategy that is very action oriented (“Just Do It,” professional athletes as spokespeople). However, one could argue that the knowledge that Nike products may be manufactured in sweatshops is an incongruent association and could damage the brand. Congruence of brand associations can lead to easier brand recall and easier linkage of additional associations to the brand node in memory. Brand associations that are congruent lead to a more cohesive brand image. Having a brand image that is cohesive and consistent allows for more associations to be retrieved. A diffuse brand image can confuse consumers as to the meaning of the brand, as well as increase the “likelihood that consumers will discount or overlook some potentially relevant brand associations in making brand decisions” (Keller, 1993, p. 8).

BRAND IDENTITY

“Brand identity is the visual and verbal expression of a brand. Identity supports, expresses, communicates, synthesizes, and visualizes the brand. It is the shortest, fastest,
most ubiquitous form of communication available” (Wheeler, 2003, p. 4). Aaker (1996) makes a key distinction between brand identity and brand image. Brand identity is how the firm wants the brand to be perceived; it is “aspirational.” Brand image is the actuality of how the brand is perceived in the marketplace; it is “passive.” Consumers hold certain opinions about any given brand – that is the brand image; firms try to project certain traits about the brand – that is the brand identity. “In a fundamental sense, the brand identity represents what the organization wants the brand to stand for” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 40). Competitors can reproduce much of what a product or service does, but the brand’s identity is what sets it apart from its competitors. Other fast food restaurants provide fast, inexpensive burgers and fries, but McDonald’s is unique because of its brand identity. Consumers recognize the name, the Golden Arches, its slogan and even Ronald McDonald, and they choose to eat there because of the image they have of McDonald’s. The brand identity is what drives the brand; it provides direction, purpose and meaning. “Brand identity should be strategic, reflecting a business strategy that will lead to a sustainable advantage” (Aaker, 1996, p. 78).

For most service organizations, including sport teams, brand identity is often the most tangible aspect of the brand because consumers can own the logo and symbols on various items. The name, logo, symbol and slogan communicate the marketing message of the product, and project the brand’s identity. They can create awareness, suggest desired brand associations, imply higher quality, and develop loyal consumers. For any brand, the creation of a name, logo, colors, and other symbols can be the most important decision managers must make. They must take into account the identity they want the brand to have, and the message they hope to convey. A logo, or symbol, “can be the
central element of brand equity, the key differentiating characteristic of a brand” (Aaker, 1991, p. 197). A logo can “create awareness, associations, and a liking or feelings which in turn can affect loyalty and perceived quality” (Aaker, 1991, p. 197).

“The richness of a brand identity – its complex network of meanings – can set a brand apart from competitors and make it difficult to copy” (Aaker, 1996, p. 204). Therefore, brand identity can be a critical source of competitive advantage, and if managed properly, can distinguish the brand from its competitors and sustain the competitive advantage. The brand identity of a sports organization helps to clarify in the minds of the consumers the perceptions they hold about the team. Brand identity is a major factor in building strong brands (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Developing and executing a brand’s identity allows a manager to communicate a unique but unifying message about the brand, which can improve brand equity. Ferrand and Pages (1999) believe that “the key issues from a practitioner’s point of view are the need to quantify brand equity and to identify brand image elements that are likely to impact changes in consumer behaviour [sic] and thus lead to changes in brand equity” (p. 388). An organization’s image helps to differentiate and position it in the competitive environment, which is why it is important for firms to understand how to manage brand identity.

Brand identity management should be included as part of any marketing policy for organizations that wish to build or maintain a positive brand image among consumers. The communication of an organization’s identity must be easy to understand and relevant to the target market in order to properly utilize it as a strategic marketing tool, and ultimately, build brand equity. It is also important to focus on internal communication of
the brand identity. Employees and other organization members’ vision and culture can impact the brand identity. Therefore, more attention should be placed on internal aspects of branding, such as the role staff plays in shaping a brand’s values (deChernatony, 1999). Everyone involved in the organization (employees, partners, etc.) should be on the same page with respect to the brand identity in order to realize the full potential of the brand (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 87).

“When realized, the brand identity should help establish a relationship between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition potentially involving functional, emotional, or self-expressive benefits” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000, p. 43). A brand’s identity typically has six to 12 dimensions in order to sufficiently describe the brand’s aspiration. However, a set this size can be cumbersome, so it may be beneficial to focus on identifying the core identity – the most important elements of the brand identity – which should reflect the values of the organization (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). While many of a brand’s identity elements may need to evolve over time, its core identity is most likely to remain constant, even through new markets. “The core identities are easier to communicate both inside and outside the organization than the full, extended identity” (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). A key point for managers when developing and implementing a brand strategy is that the brand identity should drive the execution of the strategy. Often organizational problems can lead to a disconnection between the brand identity and strategy implementation (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000) suggest solutions to this disconnection by ensuring “that there is buy-in throughout the organization… [and] that the brand identity is
communicated well” (p. 63). Clear communication of the brand identity is essential for the successful implementation of the brand strategy, and ultimately of the brand itself.

**BRAND LOYALTY**

Brand loyalty is having customers who value the brand (what it is and what it represents) enough to continually purchase it and reject the competition, which creates a steady stream of revenue for the organization. It is often thought of as the ability to attract and retain customers (Aaker 1991; 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Brand loyalty may protect the organization against competition and provide a predictable level of sales. Light (1994) suggests that brand-loyal consumers may be up to nine times as profitable as disloyal ones for companies. Other research supports the belief that it is much more expensive to gain new customers than it is to retain current ones (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). However, it is important to note that repeated purchases are not necessarily an indication of brand loyalty; they could simply indicate habit or inertia.

“Brand loyalty is one of the many advantages of creating a positive brand image and manifestations of having brand equity” (Keller, 1998, p. 54). Brand loyalty is often considered the manifestation of brand equity because consumers with strong brand equity are often very loyal to that brand.

**PERCEIVED QUALITY**

Perceived quality is often defined as the consumer’s judgment of a product or service’s overall value corresponding to its intended purpose. It can also be thought of as an overall evaluation of excellence or superiority, much like an attitudinal assessment (Aaker, 1991; Netemeyer, Krishnan, Pullig, Wang, Yagci, Mean, Ricks, & Wirth, 2004). Like attitudes, perceived quality is a higher level abstraction than attributes. It is often
considered a “special type” of brand association because it influences other associations in many different contexts, and because it has been shown to influence profitability through ROI and stock return (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). When consumers perceive a brand to be of a higher quality, it can be an important advantage over the competition. The attributes and benefits of a product or service create a perception of quality in the consumer’s mind (Aaker, 1991). Understanding consumers’ perceptions of a brand will help marketers manage their brand successfully in a crowded marketplace. Perceived quality is important in the case of brand extensions. Failure to manage the perceived quality of a brand extension can negatively impact the equity of the extension, as well as the parent brand. A high consumer perception of quality is a positive brand association and managers must strive to maintain it.

BRAND EQUITY REVISITED

Strong brands contribute to increased profits and decreased marketing costs for organizations, and because of this, brand equity has become a highly researched area in marketing (Keller, 1998; Raggio & Leone, 2005). Some of the benefits of brand equity include: greater loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and to marketing crises, larger margins, more inelastic consumer response to price increases, more elastic consumer response to price decreases, greater trade cooperation and support, increased marketing communication effectiveness, possible licensing opportunities, additional brand extension opportunities, ability to attract better employees, generate greater interest from investors, and garnering more support from shareholders (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1998) As stated previously, there are many definitions of what brand equity is, each taking slightly different points of view based on their perspective and their
purpose. What they have in common is that they all tend to focus on the “added value” that a brand creates. There have been generally two different approaches to understanding brand equity. The first is a financial approach (e.g., Simon & Sullivan, 1993) and the second is a customer-based approach (e.g., Keller, 1993). The financial approach looks at the value of the brand to the firm and often attempts to measure how much the brand is worth in the market place, whereas the customer-based approach looks at the value of the brand to the customer and often attempts to improve strategic decision-making.

Raggio and Leone (2005) note that “researchers have proposed measures of brand equity, but their operationalizations define and measure only outcomes of brand equity; that is, only benefits that are hypothesized to accrue to brands that possess brand equity” (p. 3). This focus on outcome measures has hindered our understanding of brand equity. There have been general criticisms of using outcome measures, including the fact that outcome measures have alternative explanations (Keller, 1993; Raggio & Leone, 2005). These methods only measure potential outcomes of brand equity. For example, measuring brand loyalty (a component of brand equity in Aaker’s 1991 model and a potential outcome of brand equity) by looking at repurchase rates may measure consumer inertia or a lack of available alternatives in addition to the brand equity. In addition, some consumers may hold positive brand equity for a brand they have no intentions of purchasing. Another general criticism is that “outcome measures lack diagnostic ability” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 4). At best an outcome measure is a snapshot of the brand’s performance at one point in time – it does not specify how it got there, or how to change the outcome in the future.
Raggio and Leone (2005) discuss several major reasons that using outcome measures are inappropriate for the study of brand equity. The first reason is that outcome measures do not consider differences across markets, usage occasions, or groups of consumers. “Without accounting for differences in brand equity that arise from different market, usage occasion or consumer groups, brand equity researchers may over- or under-represent the brand equity of a particular brand” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 5). Secondly, outcome measures ignore non-customers and future potential customers. Outcome measures depend on some type of purchase behavior, which is often a result of more than just brand equity, as previously mentioned. Some brands are objectively better than the competition (e.g., in terms of performance, quality, or price), so purchase may not indicate any specific level of brand equity. Also, some brands such as Tiffany, Rolex, and Jaguar have developed very positive brand equity among non-customers. One may not ever purchase a product from these companies, but they still maintain positive brand equity in the minds of consumers. This is often overlooked by purchase intentions or loyalty measures.

Outcome measures often “ignore latent brand equity that represents the potential of the brand” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 6). For example, a college student with minimal income who is not in the market for an investment bank (nor would she be in the target market) may see ads for such a bank and form impressions, and as a result may develop positive brand equity. “The fact that a person decides to not purchase a brand is not proof that brand equity does not exist. In the same fashion, the fact that a person does purchase a brand – even at a price premium – cannot be conclusive proof that brand equity does exist” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 6). Therefore, these outcome measures may
be appropriate to indicate how well the brand is doing with current customers, but without non-customers and potential customers, they will underestimate the true brand equity. The third major criticism of outcome measures is that they assume different firms share the same goals and objectives. One firm may focus on market penetration while another is looking for a pricing premium. The success of the first firm’s strategy could not be measured by a price premium, and the second’s could not be measured by market share. While some of these outcome measures would be appropriate proxies for the brand equity of some firms, they cannot be applied universally. “Most of the outcome measures used in previous research on brand equity focus much more on brand value rather than brand equity” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 12).

The various approaches have left the theory of brand equity on tenuous ground. There is a “lack of a theoretical foundation for the concept of brand equity, as well as a clear distinction between brand equity and brand value” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 2). This lack of theoretical foundation, and the common use of brand equity and brand value as the same construct, has led to difficulty in developing a generally accepted measure of brand equity. Raggio and Leone (2005) conceive “that brand equity represents what the brand means to the consumer and brand value represents what the brand means to a focal company” (p. 15). Brand value takes a company-based perspective, and brand equity takes an individual-based perspective. While supporting Keller’s (1993, 1998) conceptualization of customer-based brand equity, Raggio and Leone (2005) propose a new theory of brand equity that makes a distinction between brand equity and brand value and demonstrates “the relationship between brand equity that exists in the hearts and minds of consumers and observed and unobserved individual- and market-level
outcomes” (p. 34). Rather than simply describing the components of brand equity, their model (see Appendix C) addresses the outcomes of brand equity at individual and market levels.

“The ultimate goal of brand equity research should be to understand how to develop brand equity and how to leverage brand equity to create value” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 23). Brand value can be thought of as the sale or replacement value of a brand and can vary depending on the owner and their ability to leverage brand equity (Raggio & Leone, 2005). To illustrate this point, consider different firms attempting to purchase the same brand. Each firm has access to the same financial information (the brand’s assets, liabilities, etc.), but each firm may be willing to pay a different price, based on their own capabilities (e.g., access to new channels, better resources, management, etc.) to leverage that brand’s equity. Brand equity is just one component of the brand’s entire value (Raggio & Leone, 2005). Another way to see the distinction between brand value and brand equity, is to see that brand equity can exist without brand value. Consider that financial measures of brand equity require brands to be available in the market (because a purchase is necessary) in order to have brand equity. However, even after White Cloud toilet paper was taken off the market, it was still a recognized brand name with some brand equity (Raggio & Leone, 2005).

Another example of a brand that was not on the market, but still retained brand equity was the NFL franchise Cleveland Browns. The football team (all players, coaches, and personnel) moved to Baltimore, but the city of Cleveland maintained the name, logo, colors, and history of the franchise, despite not having an actual team on the market. For years, the Browns brand existed without being an actual NFL football team. The city
was able to obtain an expansion team and give it the Browns name, in order to capitalize on the existing brand equity. Even though these two brands were not on the market providing financial value to an organization, they still had brand equity. A firm may own a brand and the value that it creates, but the brand’s equity lives in the hearts and minds of the consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005).

Similar to Keller’s (1993, 1998) construction of brand equity as the added value of a consumer’s brand knowledge (driven by brand associations), Raggio and Leone (2005) define brand equity as a consumer’s “attitude, perception, belief or desire that a brand will meet its promise of value [value to the consumer, not brand value]” (p. 26-27). Given their definition, they believe that brand equity should result in biased processing of information, persistent attitudes that are resistant to change, and behaviors that are influenced by those beliefs. “Generally, differentiation in perceived ability to meet a salient promise of value, whether based on actual experience or perceived associations, leads to differences in brand equity” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 27).

Given that brand equity always exists, Raggio and Leone (2005) suggest “that it is most easily measured when a consumer faces a condition of uncertainty” (p. 27). As mentioned previously, much research has attempted to measure brand equity using outcome and behavior measures such as market share or repurchase intentions. However, these can result in measuring habitual purchases, inertia, objective superiority of the brand, and brand equity without being able to distinguish the differences. Brand equity can certainly exist in these instances, but it is inactive, which makes it difficult to observe and measure (Raggio & Leone, 2005). For example, in the case of a habitual purchase, the consumer probably initially used brand equity as a guide for the purchase of that
brand, but after it fulfilled its promise of value to the consumer repeatedly, he no longer had to think about the purchase; it became habit and the brand equity was not activated before the purchase.

As Raggio and Leone (2005) discuss, brand equity can be measured more easily when it is active, and the consumer must demonstrate trust. The authors list several situations in which consumers must consult their consideration sets and re-evaluate the available options. These situations include: changes in the individual’s personal or usage situation, introduction of a new brand into the category, changes (positive or negative) to an existing product, brand extensions, product harm crises, claims made by a competitor, word of mouth, and out of stock situations.

Brand equity is best conceived as an intra-individual construct. Each consumer has his or her own brand knowledge and processes that information differently. Each consumer’s information processing elicits certain individual behaviors (e.g., positive response to product change, product harm, new competition, etc.). The aggregation of these individuals’ behaviors leads to market-level outcomes that have been traditionally measured (e.g., loyalty, price premium, market share, etc.). Because these outcomes are at least two stages away from the consumer (where brand equity is), Raggio and Leone’s (2005) model illustrates the importance of measuring true brand equity and not potential outcomes. “Rather than thinking about ‘managing’ brand equity, brand managers should instead think about ‘activating’ the equity that resides with the consumers, thus changing the focus from inward-looking (company) to outward-focused (consumers)” (Raggio & Leone, 2005, p. 33).
MEASURING BRAND EQUITY

As Raggio and Leone (2005) note, there is a lack of a generally accepted measure for brand equity in the literature. Many researchers have attempted to use outcome measures to try to approximate the brand equity of certain brands. As a result, brand equity research, while plentiful, has been unable to lay out specifically how organizations should measure their brand equity. Recently, some progress has been made toward developing valid and reliable scales that measure consumer-based brand equity. Yoo and Donthu (2001) develop a parsimonious multidimensional brand equity scale using Aaker’s (1991) and Keller’s (1993) conceptualizations. Yoo and Donthu’s (2001) results indicate that the 10-item Multidimensional Brand Equity (MBE) index is valid and reliable and generalizable across several cultures and product categories. Washburn and Plank (2002) use Yoo and Donthu’s (2001) MBE index in a study on co-branding. Their research found some support for using this scale, but warn that more work needs to be done in order to refine some of the items. The association items focus mainly on attributes, rather than benefits and attitudes, which are extremely important in developing strong, favorable and unique brand associations.

In the sport context, Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) investigate consumer-based brand equity in German professional soccer. The authors create the brand equity in team sport model (BETS) in order to estimate the impact of brand equity on the economic success of soccer teams. The BETS model measures each brand association on the three factors outlined by Keller (1993): strength, favorability, uniqueness. A potential drawback to the BETS is that they defined the product narrowly (the game itself), without considering other effects on the brand, like watching the games on TV or purchasing
merchandise. The authors found that “brand equity has a positive effect on purchase
intention, price premiums and brand loyalty” (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005, p. 509).
This supports previous research that identifies these as potential outcomes of brand
equity. Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) were also “able to demonstrate that brand
equity rather than athletic success has a high and significant effect on economic success”
(p. 509), thus supporting Gladden and Milne’s (1999) findings that brand equity can be
more important than athletic success, and emphasizing the important role that brand
equity plays in the success of sports organizations.

SERVICE BRANDS

Given that services lack the tangible characteristics of consumer goods, brand
development is crucial for services (Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001). Service
experiences have the unique characteristics of intangibility, inseparability of production
and consumption, heterogeneity of quality, and perishability. The problem of intangibility
of services can be overcome by developing a strong brand identity that communicates
core values (deChernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). Inseparability can be seen as an
opportunity to connect with consumers by enabling them to become co-producers. This
allows the consumers to play a role in the service experience and tailor it to meet their
needs (deChernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001).

A staff that can reliably provide exceptional customer service can significantly
reduce problems associated with heterogeneity of quality. The key to developing this
type of staff is “generating a bond between employees and the brand” (Bendapudi &
Bendapudi, 2005). Because the staff plays such a vital role in the success of a services
brand, internal acceptance of the brand and its values is as important, if not more so, as
external acceptance. Service brands represent something that is intangible, whereas products represent something tangible. Branding principles for services can be considered the same conceptually as for products; it is in the execution of those principles that there is a difference (deChernatony & Segal-Horn, 2001). In their research, deChernatony and Segal-Horn (2003) found three important criteria for successful service brands: a focused position, consistency, and values. These criteria allow service brands to offer quality experiences to, and build relationships with their consumers.

BRAND EQUITY IN SPORTS

Brand equity has been an important topic in the traditional consumer goods market for decades, but it is a relatively new concept for sport organizations, and one that is becoming increasingly important for their success. Sport organizations face growing economic constraints and increasingly fierce competition. Because consumers have so many different sport and entertainment choices these days, creating and leveraging brand equity can be the difference-maker for an organization’s survival or failure. Brand equity has recently become an emergent topic in the sport management literature. Understanding brand equity “will allow sport managers to increase the image, awareness, and revenues of their teams and programs” (Gladden, Milne & Sutton, 1998, p. 2). In fact, Gladden, Milne, and Sutton (1998) researched the literature and concepts surrounding brand equity awareness and measurement and found that little research had been done to assess brand equity in a sport setting.

Because of this, Gladden, Milne, and Sutton (1998) use Aaker’s (1991) model of brand equity as the basis for their conceptual framework for assessing brand equity in Division I college athletics. The framework delineates the antecedents, which influence
the components of brand equity (perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty). Brand equity (made up of these four components) in turn influences the consequences of brand equity, which “form a perception which the sport product holds in the minds of consumers in the marketplace. …Through continual feedback loops, the perception impacts both the antecedents and the overall brand equity” (Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998, p. 5). The antecedents of brand equity include team-related (e.g., success, star player, head coach), organization-related (e.g., reputation and tradition, conference and schedule), and market-related (e.g., support, geographic location, media coverage) components. The consequences of brand equity include national media exposure, merchandise sales, individual donations, corporate support, atmosphere, and ticket sales. Gladden, Milne, and Sutton’s (1998) framework was one of the first tools for those interested in studying brand equity in college athletics.

Robinson and Miller (2003) applied Gladden, Milne, and Sutton’s (1998) framework in order to assess the impact of a new head coach on the brand equity of a college basketball team. The authors investigated Bobby Knight’s impact on the Texas Tech men’s basketball team’s brand equity. The case study does seem to support Gladden, Milne, and Sutton’s (1998) framework that a successful coach can enhance brand equity as Robinson and Miller (2003) concluded that Knight’s hiring has strengthened Texas Tech’s brand equity (and ultimately its revenues). In an investigation into brand equity on the professional sport level, Gladden and Funk (2002) develop a scale to measure brand associations in professional team sports. The authors created the Team Association Model (TAM), which is a scale that identifies dimensions of brand associations. Through their research, the authors identified and confirmed 16 dimensions
that make up brand associations in sports. These dimensions were operationalized as product attributes (success, head coach, star player, management, stadium, logo design, product delivery, and tradition), product benefits (identification, nostalgia, pride in place, escape and peer group acceptance), and attitudes towards a product (importance, knowledge, and affect). The associations help identify what consumers think of when they think of a particular team. “It is important to understand what benefits a consumer receives from consuming a sporting event” (Gladden & Funk, 2002, p. 56), especially since team sport consumption offers practically no tangible benefits. Gladden and Funk (2002) investigated brand associations from the consumer’s perspective because, ultimately, the consumer controls the creation of brand equity. Brand equity is becoming increasingly important for teams, and understanding the elements that create positive brand associations in the mind of sports fans is going to be essential for teams’ survival.

In another article, Gladden, Irwin, and Sutton (2001) examine the focus of professional sport teams on building brand equity as a long-term strategy for success. They propose that “team management activities [will] evolve from a focus on winning as a means of realizing short-term profits to a focus on strategic management of the team brand as a means of realizing long-term appreciation in franchise value” (Gladden, Irwin, & Sutton, 2001, p. 298). This means that the business management of pro sport teams will become more strategic and that “brand management will be the prevailing focus of sport managers” (p. 313). The authors note that sport managers are going to have deal with two different, and sometimes competing, goals: building their brand image with corporations involved with sport (i.e., sponsors, corporate luxury suite purchasers, etc.); and focusing on relationship marketing with individual fans.
Gladden and Milne (1999) compare the importance of success and brand equity on team merchandise sales in the NHL, NBA, and MLB. While the authors’ use of outcome measures (price premiums and franchise values) as proxies for brand equity cannot be wholly endorsed, their findings indicate that “brand equity was important to the sales of merchandise in the NHL and in MLB” (Gladden & Milne, 1999, p. 26). This study reinforces the importance of a long-term branding strategy in sports, especially when winning can never be guaranteed. It is important to understand what sport managers can and should do to successfully manage their organizations’ brand identity and continually build and leverage brand equity. Such a brand management strategy ensures that uncontrollable factors like winning and losing do not dictate the long-term success of a sports team. Also, brand equity is an important topic for a sport organization because many of its consumers have a much higher level of identification and emotional attachment with the brand than most other goods or services that consumers buy. These higher levels of identification and attachment contribute to stronger brand equity and often strengthen an organization’s competitive advantage.

Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) have noted that for sport teams and organizations, brand equity can be considered the strength of the team name in the marketplace. However, it may be closer to definitions from Keller (1993) and Raggio and Leone (2005), to consider brand equity for sport organizations to be consumers’ knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and beliefs that the brand (team) will fulfill its promise of value, where the “promise of value” is whatever the consumer hopes to get out of the experience (e.g., fun, entertainment, diversion, attachment, identification, association, escape, excitement, competition, etc.). This means that consumers with strong brand
equity for a sports organization would display a biased processing of information regarding the team, persistent attitudes that are resistant to change, and behaviors that are influenced by their beliefs that the brand fulfills its promise.

Weak brand equity can lead to the deterioration of sport organizations. For example, the Montreal Expos, which had been a relatively successful (in terms of wins and losses) professional baseball team, may be considered a team that had weak brand equity. Their perceived quality seemed to be low (even when the team was fairly successful); they were playing an “American” sport in a French-Canadian marketplace, which hurt their brand awareness and associations with consumers; and they had relatively few brand loyal consumers. In fact, the team’s brand equity seemed so weak that the previous owner wanted to get rid of the team. Without a true owner to buy the team, Major League Baseball took over ownership. After several years of trying to relocate, the Expos have finally moved to Washington, D.C. and changed their team name, logo, and brand identity to the Washington Nationals. This seems to have substantially improved its brand equity.

It is nearly the same team (same players, managers, personnel) as the one in Montreal, but the move to a new city and a new identity have boosted the brand’s equity among consumers. By relocating the team to Washington, D.C. and changing the identity, MLB has been able to leverage existing brand equity that locals retained from the former Washington Senators team and add it to the improving brand equity (after the move) that the Expos already had. The team’s on-field success may play a role in the brand’s improvement, but from their first game in Washington, D.C., consumers seem to be flocking to see the team play and purchase the new identity: Washington Nationals.
merchandise. Strong brand equity can lead to a sustained competitive advantage. The Chicago Cubs are a great example of a team with strong brand equity. Despite often being a “loser” on the field, the Cubs have extremely loyal fans with strong, positive, unique brand associations, and high awareness, which is ultimately, strong brand equity. Understanding how brand equity can lead to a competitive advantage is essential for sport managers because sport naturally has an uncertain outcome, and they cannot control wins and losses.

Sport organizations are learning that brand equity is a vital asset that needs to be leveraged. Understanding brand equity can direct and augment a sport organization’s marketing efforts. Because of this, managing brand equity should be a major part of a sport organization’s strategic planning efforts. It is important to understand what sport managers can and should do to successfully manage their organizations’ brand identity in order to continually build and leverage brand equity. Scholarly research on brand equity in sports has only recently begun, but because of its importance to the survival of sport organizations, more attention should be focused on it in the future. Research on brand equity can not only help reflect and guide the direction that sport managers take with regards to brand management, but also it can add to the understanding of brand equity and its role in sports organizations.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The present study investigated the effects of brand uncertainty situations on the brand equity that consumers hold for a college football team. The independent variable was the brand uncertainty situations presented to the subjects in fictional scenarios. The dependent variable was the subjects’ post-test brand equity scores. The goal of this research was to investigate two hypotheses concerning the effect that brand uncertainty situations have on consumers’ brand equity for collegiate football teams. The hypotheses, which are introduced in Chapter 1, were generated from the sport management literature as well as the marketing and branding literature. This study was designed to provide a better understanding of how consumers’ brand equity can be affected by certain situations. This chapter describes the methodological procedures employed in this study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was an experimental study, using a pretest-posttest control group design. This design calls for subjects to be randomly assigned to two groups – a control group and an experimental group. A pretest is administered to both groups to guarantee equivalence, and then the experimental group is exposed to a treatment. Finally, both groups are given a posttest to measure the effect of the treatment (Campbell & Stanley,
1963). Figure 3.1 illustrates this design type, where $O$ represents a process or observation and $X$ symbolizes the group’s exposure to the treatment.

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
R & O & X & O \\
R & O & O \\
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Figure 3.1: Illustration of the pretest/posttest control group design

This study examined consumers’ brand equity for a Division I college football and consisted of five groups (four experimental and one control). All groups responded to an initial pretest that measured consumer-based brand equity. This pretest provided a baseline measure of brand equity for all groups. The randomly assigned treatment groups received one of four hypothetical scenarios posing a specific brand uncertainty situation. The four scenarios represented two brand uncertainty situations that have been identified in the branding literature as affecting brand equity: change to an existing product, and word-of-mouth (Raggio & Leone, 2005). These two situations were chosen because they seem to occur more frequently in sports than the other situations. Two of the scenarios were positive and two were negative situations. The change to existing product scenarios were presented as one positive and one negative situation. There were two word of mouth scenarios, which represented one positive and one negative situation. Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) identified a star player as being a factor in brand equity for college athletics, so the change to existing product scenarios involved the star player. Gladden, Milne and Sutton (1998) also identified athletic success as a factor in the brand equity of a collegiate team. Thus, the word-of-mouth situations (both
scenarios) involved athletic success for the upcoming season. After reading one of the scenarios, the treatment groups were given the posttest measure of consumer-based brand equity. At the same time, the control group, which did not receive a fictional scenario, was also given the posttest measure of consumer-based brand equity.

Participants in the treatment groups received one of four article manipulations: Negative Star Player, Positive Star Player; Positive Athletic Success; Negative Athletic Success. The Negative Star Player manipulation was an article, “Player Suspended for 2006 Season” that described a star player who is suspended for an entire year because he tested positive for a banned substance during an NCAA random drug test. The Positive Star Player manipulation was an article, “_______(player’s name) Expected to Shimmer for _______ University” that described the emergence of a new star for the team. The Positive Athletic Success manipulation was an article, “_______ University Picked to be Top Team” that explained that many college football experts agree that the team will be very successful on the field. The Negative Athletic Success manipulation was an article, “Down Year Predicted for _______ University Football” that explained that the experts believe that the team will not be very successful on the field. Please see Appendices D-G for these manipulations.

As previously mentioned, in this investigation there was a control group, and a treatment group. There were four levels of the treatment. To illustrate this study’s specific design, see Figure 3.2.
Using a pretest/posttest control group experimental design addresses the major sources of internal validity (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Using a control group ensures that any effects due to history, maturation, or testing that are seen in the experimental group are also seen in the control group. Selection is not a problem because the subjects were randomly assigned to the treatment levels and control groups. Mortality is not a significant factor because the data collection occurred during a short time period – there was not much opportunity for subjects engaged in the study to drop out.

Also, the treatments did not affect the subjects, which can be a source of mortality. The location threat was eliminated by conducting the study in similar classrooms; in addition, based on the focus of the study, the location should have no impact on the subjects or the treatments. Instrumentation did not pose a threat to internal validity because all data from all the subjects in the treatment and control groups was
collected using identical instruments, scoring was done in the same manner for all pretest and posttest questionnaires, and human observations played no role.

The attitude of the subjects could have been a threat to internal validity, but all groups (control and treatment) were treated equally, so they should not have been affected by being in different groups. Also, the study measured a consumer’s brand equity, not intelligence or performance, so their participation in the study should have had no effect on their attitude. The implementation threat was not a factor in this study because the treatments did not involve different methods that would need to be implemented. Regression was not a threat to internal validity because the subjects were not selected based on any performance measures. Statistical conclusion validity could be threatened, but the number of subjects included in the sample was sufficient, the statistical test assumptions were not violated, and the measures used were adequately reliable to ensure that this was not a problem.

There are several major threats to external validity in a pretest-posttest control group design (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). The first is the interaction of testing and X (the independent variable). This threat relates to the difficulty in generalizing the results to a greater population who has not been pretested. While the pretest was necessary in this study, it is not likely to have caused any interaction with X; however, the interaction of the pretest and the treatment was measured to ensure that none occurred. The second threat is the reactive effects of experimental arrangements. Using fictitious scenarios decreased the external validity, but it allowed for maximum control of the variable (Fink, Cunningham, & Kensicki, 2004). Another threat is multiple treatment interference. The subjects were only exposed to one treatment, so there was no interference from other
treatments. The final threat is a key one, the interaction of selection and X. This threat refers to the following: for what groups of subjects are these findings true? Because the experimentally accessible population of college students is different than the target population of all consumers and non-consumers of college football, the generalizability and external validity for this study are restricted.

The pretest-posttest control group design is strong because it allows for maximum control of internal validity. The main weakness of this design is due to the pretest, which can sensitize participants either to the environment or to the problems addressed in the study. Also, pretests rarely occur outside of experimental environments, so they can limit the external validity (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). Although the pretest can pose problems when using this design, it was necessary in this instance to get a baseline measure of subjects’ brand equity. This baseline allowed for greater understanding of the final posttest brand equity scores. For the purposes of this study, the strengths of the pretest-posttest control group design outweighed the weaknesses.

SAMPLING METHOD

The level of analysis for this study was the individual consumer. Ideally, the target population of this study would be all consumers and non-consumers of college football in the United States. The sampling frame for this study was college students from an area university. However, the sample was a convenience sample of college students from The Ohio State University (Division I). Raggio and Leone (2005) encourage accessing non-customers when measuring brand equity because brand equity can exist even if a purchase is not made. While it is possible that these students were more likely than the general population to be consumers of their school’s football team,
that is not necessarily the case. It was the researcher’s belief that the variance among students in their brand equity levels was sufficient to use them in the sample. Using a convenience sample of college students may limit the external generalizability and validity, but the subjects were randomly assigned to the treatment levels to provide internal validity.

When determining the sample size, there are considerations to be made. One of the most critical considerations is selecting a sample size that is sufficient to have power in the analysis. Power is the probability rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false, or of discovering a true relationship. It is a “fractional value between 0 and 1.00 and is defined as 1-β, where β is the probability of committing a Type II error” (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000, p. 453). Because this is exploratory research, a smaller effect size is necessary. To detect an effect size of .12 with a power of .80 and α of .05, Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1998, p.165) suggest that a sample of at least 100 is needed. This estimate should provide adequate power for this study. Therefore, the sample size for this study was intended to be at least 120 (n=120), with approximately 25 subjects in each treatment level (positive product change, negative product change, positive word-of-mouth, and negative word-of-mouth) and the control group. However, because I had the opportunity to collect additional data, I included 160 participants. Nineteen dropped out of the study because they were absent from class on the second day, for a total of 141 in the final sample.

The subjects in this study were from a sizeable Midwestern university, which competes athletically in Division I-A, located in a large metropolitan city. Students were not required to participate in this study, so they provided informed, written consent
before taking part in the study. After the data was collected, students were debriefed regarding the subject and purpose of the research study.

INSTRUMENTATION BACK TRANSLATION PROCEDURE

The instrument (the BETS) used in this study was developed for use in German professional soccer. For use in this study, the BETS needed to be translated from German into English. Because the BETS relied on indicators that were originally researched in English and the article in which the instrument is discussed was published in English, one could have confidence in the modified version of the instrument. However, there is the issue of the equivalence of the instrument in German and English languages. That is, Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt’s (2005) instrument in the German language was translated to the English language for use in this study. It was important to establish the equivalence of the two versions, and accordingly, Brislin’s (1990) guidelines were followed. Two bilingual individuals were requested to translate independently the German version into the English language. In the next step, the two experts and the investigator scrutinized the two English versions for any inconsistencies in the content of the items. A few minor variations in the words employed in the translated versions did not affect the meaning of the items involved. Thus, the two experts agreed on a common wording of the items involved, and the final single English version of the scale was agreed upon. The next step in the process was to ask two additional bilingual individuals to translate the English version back into the German language. These two versions of the back-translated version were compared to each other by the experts. As the two back-translated versions were comparable to the original German version, the English version was deemed equivalent to the German version.
VARIABLE DESCRIPTIONS

The dependent variable was the posttest brand equity score, which was determined by the completion of the modified BETS instrument. The BETS instrument operationalizes brand equity as four factors (brand awareness, product-related attributes, non-product related attributes, and brand benefits). These four factors have 14 indicators: recognition and familiarity (awareness); athletic success, star player(s), coach, and management (product related attributes); logo, stadium, stadium atmosphere, and regional importance/pride in place (non-product related attributes); fan identification, interest of family and friends, nostalgia, and escape (brand benefits). Each brand association (each indicator) was measured with three items designed to determine the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of each association.

The brand awareness dimension (consisting of two items measuring recognition and familiarity) had an acceptable reliability of $\alpha = 0.63$. The three brand image factors include the product related and non-product related attributes and brand benefits. “Multivariate analyses including reliability analysis, EFA and CFA of the brand image factors, produce very good to satisfying results” (Bauer, Sauer, & Scmitt, 2005, p. 502). The construct reliability for the four factors was as follows: awareness = 0.45; product related attributes = 0.82; non-product related attributes = 0.82; and brand benefits = 0.85. The model had an adjusted goodness of fit index of 0.986. The strength of these indicators is measured by posing the question, “What comes to mind when you think of the _______ (team)?; and then measuring the level of agreement on a 7-point scale with the statement “I think of… (the athletic success, one or more star player, the stadium, etc.). The favorability of these indicators is measured by posing the question, “What do
you like about the _______ (team)?; and then measuring the level of agreement on a 7-point scale with the statement “I like… (the athletic success, one or more star player, the stadium, etc.). The uniqueness of these indicators is measured by posing the question, “What do you consider unique about the _______ (team)?; and then measuring the level of agreement on a 7-point scale with the statement “I consider as unique… (the athletic success, one or more star player, the stadium, etc.). The BETS used in this study is included in Appendix H.

The BETS scale was developed for use in Germany, measuring professional sport brand equity so it was modified to apply to U.S. collegiate sport. Some items were altered because they were too culturally specific (i.e., questions asking about the trainer of the club were actually pertaining to the head coach of the team). Because the 14 indicators are similar to Gladden, Milne, and Sutton’s (1998) antecedents of brand equity for Division I college athletics, no major modifications to existing items were necessary.

There was one independent variable for this study, the brand uncertainty situation. A brand uncertainty situation is any time a consumer is forced to think about his or her feelings or perceptions of a brand. In these situations, a consumer cannot simply rely on habit or inertia in his or her use (or lack of use) of a product. For example, when a consumer has recently heard negative reports about her favorite brand of cereal, she has to evaluate how she feels about the cereal. Whether or not she chooses to discount the negative reports will depend a great deal on her level of brand equity. If she has strong brand equity for that cereal, then, according to the benefits of brand equity, she will be more resistant to those negative reports. If she was buying that cereal out of habit and has relatively weak brand equity, then she will be more likely to respond to those reports
by not buying the cereal. This study will focus on two brand uncertainty situations that are fairly common in collegiate sports: change to an existing product and word of mouth, which can both be positive or negative.

Therefore, this study operationalized brand uncertainty situations as fictitious scenarios that presented consumers with the following: negative product change, positive product change, negative word of mouth, and positive word of mouth. Star player and athletic success have both been identified in the literature as team sport product related attributes, so the scenarios manipulated these attributes. The product change scenarios (positive and negative, respectively) involved the star player, and the word of mouth scenarios (positive and negative) involved athletic success. The fictitious scenario articles are included in Appendices D-G.

To establish the content and face validity of the four scenarios, a panel of experts evaluated them to ensure that they accurately characterized two brand uncertainty situations (product change, and word of mouth), two positive situations and two negative situations. Also a manipulation check was done to ensure that the positive articles elicited more positive feelings and the negative articles elicited more negative feelings among subjects. The articles were given to 57 participants to read and then they were asked to respond to three semantic differential scales. The statements, “Thinking about this team, I feel… very negatively to very positively;” “When thinking about this team’s success, I feel… very uncertain to very certain;” and “Thinking about this team makes me feel… very bad to very good,” were presented along a 7-point scale. A $t$-test was run to determine if the participants’ mean scores are different based on which article they
read. This manipulation check ensured that the articles do in fact manipulate the various situations. The results of the $t$-tests are presented in detail in Chapter 4.

The pretest brand equity scores were expected to correlate with the dependent variable, the posttest brand equity scores. Because of this, the pretest brand equity scores were analyzed as a covariate (Maxwell & Delaney, 2000).

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

After receiving IRB approval, the classes were randomly selected and their instructors were approached to obtain permission to carry out the study. Students were informed of the nature of study and the time commitment required. The data was collected in person by the researcher. The questionnaire was administered during class time to all students who agreed to participate. The students responded to the pretest brand equity measure (the BETS) during one class period. Subjects were asked to write an alias on their questionnaire; this alias was known only to the respondent so that anonymity was maintained. Students were asked to write that same alias on their questionnaire during the posttest brand equity measure. This allowed the pretest and posttest scores of each subject to be compared, without needing to identify anyone. After the pretest was administered, the subjects were randomly assigned to treatment levels. The researcher returned in one week to administer the second half of the experiment: the treatment and the posttest measure. Each subject received one of the four treatment scenarios which were distributed in class and the subjects were asked to carefully read and consider the information in the scenarios. After they finished reading, they completed the posttest questionnaire. The control group simply received the posttest questionnaire without a scenario. Once all subjects completed their posttests, they were
debriefed regarding the nature and purpose of the study and thanked for their time and participation.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Once the data was collected, the instrument was tested again for reliability and validity. The data was entered into SPSS and analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were used to examine the results. Maxwell and Delaney (2000) suggest that ANCOVA is appropriate for this type of experimental design. However, before beginning the ANCOVAs, tests of the homogeneity-of-slopes assumption were done to ensure that there was no significant interaction “between the covariate and the factor in the prediction of the dependent variable” (Green & Salkind, 2003, p. 196). With no significant interaction present, the ANCOVA proceeded. A test of the main effect and the covariate was conducted. This produced an F value for the overall model, indicating if the model was significant. The F values for the variables indicated if the main effect was significant (e.g., main effect for brand uncertainty situations). The partial eta squared provided the proportion of variance of the dependent variable related to the factor, holding constant (partially out) the covariate (Green & Salkind, 2003). Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were also computed in order to describe the results.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the results of the study. The results are presented in six sections. The first section outlines the manipulation check of the independent variable (the treatment levels). The second section presents information about the subjects of this study. The third section discusses scale validity and reliability using Cronbach’s alpha and item-to-total correlations. The fourth section presents descriptive statistics of the variables of interest as well as tests for differences in mean scores. The hypothesis testing is presented in the fifth section. The final section addresses additional analyses that were undertaken.

MANIPULATION CHECK

As mentioned in Chapter 3, four fictitious scenarios were developed. The scenarios depicted 1) positive product change; 2) negative product change; 3) positive word of mouth; and 4) negative word of mouth. The fictitious scenarios were evaluated by a panel of three experts to ensure face and content validity and make certain that the articles were as realistic as possible. The panel of experts consisted of a sport management professor, a marketing professor, and a former sports journalist. The panel of experts read the articles and provided suggestions for how to improve the articles in
terms of realistic sport product change and word of mouth scenarios. Once face and content validity were established, the articles were given to a sample of 57 college students. These subjects were asked to read one article and respond to three semantic differential scales. The statements, “Thinking about this team, I feel… very negatively to very positively;” “When thinking about this team’s success, I feel… very uncertain to very certain;” and “Thinking about this team makes me feel… very bad to very good,” were presented along a 7-point scale.

Two independent samples t-tests were run to determine if the participants’ mean scores were different based on which article they had read. The first t-test evaluated the means of the product change scenarios (negative article about a star player and positive article about a star player). The test was significant, $t(25) = -3.91$, $p = .001$ and confirmed that the positive product change article mean was significantly higher than the negative product change mean. Students who read the positive product change article ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 0.97$) on average felt more positively about the team than those who read the negative product change article ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.06$). The second t-test evaluated the means of the word of mouth scenarios (negative article about the team’s potential for success and positive article about the team’s potential for success). The test was significant, $t(28) = -3.45$, $p = .002$, and confirmed that the positive word of mouth mean was significantly higher than the negative word of mouth mean. Subjects who read the positive word of mouth article ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 0.84$) on average felt more positively about the team than those who read the negative word of mouth article ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.23$). The t-tests confirmed that the articles could successfully serve as manipulations (treatments) in this study.
SUBJECTS

Subjects were selected from six separate SFHP classes; three were activity classes and three were lecture-style classes. The pretest was given to the students in these classes who volunteered to participate and 160 subjects completed the pretest. After a week, the researcher returned to these classes to have participants read the fictitious scenarios and respond to the posttest and 141 subjects completed both the pretest and the posttest. There were 19 subjects who completed the pretest, but not the posttest due to class absence. The gender of the participants was relatively evenly divided; 48.2% of respondents were male (n = 68); 51.8% were female (n = 73). Each subject was randomly assigned to a treatment or control group and the distribution of the groups was as follows: the positive product change group had 29 cases; the negative product change group had 27 cases; the positive word of mouth group had 28 cases; the negative word of mouth group had 31 cases; and the control group had 26 cases.

SCALE VALIDITY & RELIABILITY

The BETS instrument used in this study had been tested previously for reliability and validity and produced good to satisfying results. The model produced a goodness of fit index (GFI) of 0.990, and an adjusted goodness of fit index of 0.986 (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005). The instrument was made up of items representing four factors: awareness, product related attributes, non-product related attributes, and benefits. Additionally, Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) derived and overall brand equity score using the means of these four factors.
Because the survey had initially been used in German professional soccer, and this study was investigating American college athletics, it was important to test it to ensure that the instrument was acceptable for use in this situation. After the pretest, the scale was examined for validity and reliability. Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities indicated excellent internal reliability. The alpha for the awareness items was .811; product related attributes was .912; non-product related attributes was .924 and the alpha for the brand benefit items was .954. To determine validity, item-to-total correlations were calculated. Items should have a correlation of at least .25 and correlate highest with its own dimension. All but four items met these conditions as illustrated in Table 4.1. The Strength of Success and Strength of Star Player(s) were retained because their correlations with the awareness factor were close to the correlation with their own factor (product related attributes) they seemed to be conceptually consistent with the product related attributes more than awareness. The three items relating to a team’s history/tradition were eliminated because of the strong correlation of the items with other factors; these items were also eliminated by Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) in their final BETS model.

The Cronbach’s alphas and Item-to-total correlations were also conducted on the posttest instrument. The results of the posttest analyses were similar to the pretest and are presented in Table 4.2. Taken in tandem, it was determined that the three items relating to history should be deleted from further analysis.
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Continued

Table 4.1: Corrected Item-to-Total Correlations and Cronbach’s alphas for pretest measures
Table 4.1 continued

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Table 4.2: Corrected Item-to-Total Correlations and Cronbach’s alphas for posttest measures
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**ALPHA**

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FACTOR MEAN SCORES & STANDARD DEVIATIONS

This study utilized an instrument that measured the four factors of consumer-based brand equity in college athletics. An aggregate look at the data on these factors (awareness, product related attributes, non-product related attributes, brand benefits) provides insight into the subjects’ levels of brand equity. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for the factors on both the pretest and posttest measurements. In addition, an overall brand equity mean score (pretest and posttest) was computed by adding the means of the four factors and dividing by four. All of the mean scores for the four factors as well as the overall brand equity measure (on both the pretest and the posttest) were well above the mid-point on the 7-point scale. These can be seen in Table 4.3.

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<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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Table 4.3: Brand equity factors pretest mean scores and standard deviations
Additionally, correlations of the variables of interest were computed. These can be found in Table 4.4.

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<td>.483(**)</td>
<td>.558(**)</td>
<td>.718(**)</td>
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<td>.877(**)</td>
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**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Table 4.4: Correlations of factors of brand equity

As the correlation table shows, the four factors of brand equity are significantly correlated with one another. Product related attributes and benefits had the highest correlation (r = .74) followed by the correlation between benefits and non-product related attributes (r = .72). The lowest correlation was between the factor of awareness and non-product related attributes (r = .48). While the correlations were significant, and some were high, it still appears as though the factors are conceptually distinct from one another.
Additionally, the table shows that the benefits factor had the highest correlation with overall brand equity \( (r = .92) \), followed by product related attributes \( (r = .88) \), followed by non-product related attributes \( (.86) \), followed by awareness \( (.72) \). To determine if these correlations were significantly different than one another, t scores were calculated. The only significant difference in the correlations was between the awareness-overall brand equity correlation and the other factors’ correlations with overall brand equity \( \text{t score (4, 139) = 6.17, p < .001; t score (4, 139) = 3.02, p < .01; t score (4, 139) = 3.00, p < .01} \). Thus, all factors correlated highly with the overall brand equity score (as would be expected since it is a composite of those scores). However, there were only statistically significant differences between the awareness-overall brand correlation and the other factors’ correlations with overall brand equity. Thus, the benefits-overall brand equity correlation and the product related attribute-overall brand equity correlation, and the non-product related attribute-overall brand equity correlation were not significantly different from one another.

The pretest mean scores indicate that awareness factor had the highest mean score \( (M = 6.63, SD = 0.69) \). The second highest mean score among the four factors was for non-product related attributes \( (M = 5.99, SD = 1.05) \). The next highest mean score of the four factors was product related attributes \( (M = 5.64, SD = 0.94) \). The lowest of the four factors’ mean scores was for brand benefits \( (M = 4.83, SD = 1.46) \). The pretest overall brand equity mean score was \( 5.77, (SD = 0.89) \).

Paired sampled t-tests indicated that the mean scores on the factors were all significantly different from one another. A Bonferroni’s correction (.05/6) was undertaken to correct for family wise error rate. The awareness mean score was
significantly higher than the product related attribute mean score, $t_{(1,141)} = 15.15, p < .000$; and significantly higher than the non-product related mean score $t_{(1,141)} = 8.08, p < .000$; and significantly higher than the benefits mean score $t_{(1,141)} = 17.58, p < .000$. The non-product related attribute mean score was significantly higher than the product related attribute mean score, $t_{(1,141)} = 5.17, p < .000$; and it was significantly higher than the benefits mean score, $t_{(1,141)} = 13.70, p < .000$. Finally, the mean score for product related attributes was significantly higher than the benefits mean score, $t_{(1,141)} = 9.72, p < .000$. Thus, while the mean scores on the factors were all quite high, they did differ significantly from one another.

Men and women had different mean scores on the factors as indicated in Table 4.5.

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<td>5.46</td>
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<td>4.43</td>
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Table 4.5: Mean scores based on gender

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was utilized to test for significant differences. Gender was the independent variable and the dependent variables were pre-test scores on overall brand equity, awareness, product related attributes, non-product related attributes, and benefits. The overall Wilks’s $\lambda$ was significant, $F_{(4,136)} = 5.63, p < .001$. Thus, post-hoc analyses of variance were conducted on the dependent variables.
These indicated that mean scores were significantly different between men and women on three of the dependent variables. Men and women differed significantly on the product related attributes mean score ($F_{(1, 140)} = 6.11, p < .05$), and gender explained 4.2% of the variance. The male mean score ($M = 5.84, SD = 0.85$) was higher than the female mean score ($M = 5.46, SD = 0.98$) on this factor. They also differed significantly on the benefits factor ($F_{(1, 140)} = 11.86, p < .01$), and gender explained 8% of the variance. Males again had a higher mean score ($M = 5.25, SD = 1.36$) than the female subjects ($M = 4.43, SD = 1.45$) on this factor. Finally, men and women differed significantly on the overall brand equity mean score ($F_{(1, 140)} = 4.36, p < .05$), and gender explained 4% of the variance. Again, the mean score was higher for men ($M = 5.96, SD = 0.87$) than for women ($M = 5.60, SD = 0.88$).

**HYPOTHESES TESTING**

The two hypotheses of this study were tested using one-way analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) for each brand equity factor. The independent variable, the fictitious scenarios, had five levels: negative product change, positive product change, negative word of mouth, positive word of mouth, and control. The dependent variable was the posttest brand equity score (for each of the four brand equity factors and an overall brand equity measure) and the covariate was the pretest brand equity score (for each of the four brand equity factors and an overall brand equity measure).

None of the ANCOVAs was significant which indicates that none of the treatments had a significant effect on subjects’ post-test scores. Specifically, the ANCOVA analyzing the relationship between the treatment and the posttest score on the awareness factor was not significant, $F(4, 135) = 1.78, p = 0.137$. The mean of the pretest
awareness factor ($M = 6.63$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 6.67$).

The ANCOVA for the product related attributes factor was not significant, $F(4,135) = 0.67, p = 0.615$. The mean of the pretest product related attributes factor ($M = 5.64$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 5.71$).

The ANCOVA for the non-product related attributes factor was not significant, $F(4,135) = 0.74, p = 0.567$. The mean of the pretest non-product related attributes factor ($M = 5.99$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 6.01$).

The ANCOVA for the brand benefits factor was not significant, $F(4,135) = 1.59, p = 0.180$. The mean of the pretest brand benefits factor ($M = 4.83$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 5.01$).

Finally, the ANCOVA for the overall brand equity measure was not significant, $F(4,135) = 0.41, p = 0.802$. The mean of the pretest overall brand equity measure ($M = 5.77$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 5.85$).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that control group posttest scores would not differ significantly from their pretest scores because the subjects’ brand equity would be not activated by the brand uncertainty situation (treatment). The results are inconclusive with respect to this hypothesis. While the control group’s scores did not differ significantly on the posttest, it cannot be certain that this is due to a lack of brand equity activation because the treatment groups’ post-test scores also did not differ significantly on the post-test.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that scores on the posttest brand equity measures would be significantly more affected (positively or negatively) by the brand uncertainty situation
for those who have lower initial levels of brand equity than those with higher levels of brand equity. Those with initially strong brand equity should be resistant to the brand uncertainty situation. This hypothesis was partially supported. Because the mean scores on the pretests were so high for all of the factors of brand equity (i.e., all were well above the mid-point of the scale with the lowest mean score being 4.83), we know the sample had perceptions of high brand equity for the team of interest. The fact that the treatments of product change and word of mouth situations did not significantly affect the posttest scores of the subjects (as indicated by the ANCOVAs described above) could very well be the result of the fact that the subjects had such high initial levels of brand equity for the team. However, the fact that the data was so skewed led us to run additional analyses, described below, to try to get at this issue in more detail.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Testing subjects with lower mean scores

Because the data was negatively skewed, additional analyses were conducted to further examine the results. As mentioned, the data was significantly negatively skewed and the mean scores for the four factors and an overall measure of brand equity were all well above the midpoint of the 7-point scale. If brand uncertainty situations do indeed impact those with lower levels of brand equity, we thought we might see different results for subjects with lower mean scores. Initially, we tried to “group” the subjects by their pretest mean scores into “high” and “low” groups to run a MANOVA on the posttest scores. However, the cell sizes were too unbalanced to carry out the analysis. Therefore, we decided to filter out the subjects with the highest mean scores. We then conducted the same analyses as described above (ANCOVAs) on subjects with mean scores below 5.5
on each of the factors. We used a cut-off point of 5.5 to get enough subjects to be able to run the analyses. We could not run an ANCOVA on the awareness factor as only seven subjects had a mean score below 5.5.

As before, the results indicated that the treatment did not have a significant effect on the posttest mean scores. More specifically, the ANCOVA on the product related attributes factor was not significant, $F_{(5,51)} = 0.35, p = 0.847$. For this group (n=57), the mean of the pretest product related attributes factor ($M = 4.74$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 4.94$).

The ANCOVA on the non-product related attributes factor was not significant, $F_{(5,27)} = 0.32, p = 0.861$. For this group (n=33), the mean of the pretest non-product related attributes factor ($M = 4.41$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 4.71$).

The ANCOVA on the brand benefits factor indicated that the relationship between the treatment and posttest scores was not significant, $F_{(5,81)} = 0.43, p = 0.790$. For this group (n=87), the mean of the pretest benefits factor ($M = 3.94$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 4.26$).

Finally, the ANCOVA on the overall brand equity measure was not significant, $F_{(5,39)} = 0.77, p = 0.549$. For this group (n=45) the mean of the pretest overall brand equity factor ($M = 4.74$) was not significantly different from the posttest mean ($M = 4.93$).

Thus, even subjects with relatively lower pre-test mean scores (5.5 or below) on the factors were not significantly influenced by the treatments. This could indicate that we should reject our hypotheses. However, as can be seen in Table 4.6, even the mean
scores of those subjects who had “lower” pre-test scores had mean scores above the mid-
point of the scale. Because so few subjects had truly low scores (i.e., below 3.5), we
could not fully assess this hypothesis. The brand equity scores for our team of interest
were just too high. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Standard Deviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>NPRMEAN (n = 33)</td>
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<td>BENMEAN (n = 87)</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEOvrMEAN (n = 45)</td>
<td>4.74</td>
<td>.72</td>
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Table 4.6: Pretest mean scores and standard deviations for subjects with mean scores of 5.5 or below

*Gender by Treatment Interaction*

Due to the fact that there were gender differences in mean scores of the pretest
measures of the factors of brand equity, we decided to run additional analyses of
covariance and added a gender by treatment interaction. Thus, we again ran five
ANCOVAs using each factor of brand equity as a different dependent variable in each
analysis.
Only one of the ANCOVAs was significant. The ANCOVA on the product related attributes factor was significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 3.12, p = 0.017$, and the gender-treatment interaction explained nearly 9% of the variance. The results of this ANCOVA can be seen in Table 4.7. Thus, gender interacted with the treatment in this factor only.

All other analyses were not significant. The ANCOVA on the awareness factor was not significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 2.02, p = 0.096$. The ANCOVA on the non-product related attributes was not significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 2.09, p = 0.086$. The ANCOVA on the benefits factor was not significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 1.02, p = 0.399$. Finally, the ANCOVA on the overall brand equity measure was not significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 2.32, p = 0.06$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
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<tr>
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<td>5.52</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>.82</td>
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</table>

1 = Negative Product Change; 2 = Positive Product Change; 3 = Negative Word of Mouth; 4 = Positive Product Change; 5 = Control

$F_{(1,140)} = 3.12, p = 0.017$

Table 4.7: Results of ANCOVA testing gender-treatment interaction on the product related attribute factor
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Over the last few decades, research in brand equity has been plentiful and it continues to grow. The topic has its origins in the marketing literature, but the importance of brands of all types in today’s marketplace has led to the increase in attention that brand equity is getting in many other academic areas, including sport management. Brand management has become an area of importance for organizations of all types, from consumer product goods to services to sport organizations. Successfully managing the organization’s brand (or brands) provides the company with a competitive advantage – an asset that is valuable, but that cannot be readily duplicated by the competition. However, the focus of the organization should not begin and end with the brand. It has to realize the importance of the customer in the equation. A strong brand is one that has developed a relationship with its customers and focuses on the customer, rather than just focusing on the brand itself (Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2004).

The branding literature has become more concentrated on the consumer and Rust, Zeithaml, and Lemon (2004) note that organizations must remind themselves that “brands exist to serve customers, not the other way around” (p. 110). Brand equity represents what a particular brand means to consumers (Raggio & Leone, 2005); it comes from consumers’ knowledge about the brand, which is made up of their awareness of the brand
and the brand’s image (Keller, 1993, 1998). It is an individual’s evaluation of a brand. Because of the individual nature of brand equity, understanding it and measuring it can be very difficult. “Brand equity varies dramatically from customer to customer” (Rust, Zeithaml, & Lemon, 2004, p. 118). It is also often overlooked in brand equity research that non-customers can hold brand equity for a particular brand. These individuals represent potential and future consumers, so their brand equity should not be ignored, though it often is (Raggio & Leone, 2005).

MEASURING BRAND EQUITY

One of the weaknesses of brand equity research is that there has yet to be one consistent, generally accepted measure of brand equity (Raggio & Leone, 2005). Often brand equity is operationalized as market-level outcomes of brand equity – brand loyalty, willingness to pay a price premium, market share, etc. One problem with measuring market-level outcomes as brand equity is that these outcomes often have alternative explanations, including inertia, habit, and a lack of acceptable alternatives. Another problem with using outcomes as proxies for brand equity is that they often rely on a purchase. This can exclude non-customers, including those who hold strong brand equity but do not make a purchase, but who may be future customers (e.g., a college student who may hold strong brand equity for a luxury car that they cannot yet afford). Raggio and Leone (2005) argue that brand equity should be measured at the individual level because that’s where it exists.

THE BETS INSTRUMENT

This study provides some support for the use of the BETS scale (Bauer, Sauer, & Schmitt, 2005) as a measure of individual consumer-based brand equity in the team sport
setting. It does not rely on outcome measures as a proxy for brand equity and it measures brand equity at the individual level. The instrument consists of four factors of brand equity: awareness, product related attributes, non-product related attributes, and brand benefits (as identified by Keller, 1993). These four factors measure the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of 14 brand associations that had been previously identified by Gladden and Funk (2002). These associations include: recognition, familiarity, athletic success, star player(s), head coach, athletic department, team logo, stadium, atmosphere at home games, regional importance, fan identification, interest of friends and family, nostalgia, and escape. Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) tested the BETS model using confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis, which produced good to satisfactory results.

For use in this study, the instrument was translated from German to English. Data was collected and the instrument was checked for validity and reliability. Results of item-to-total correlations, Cronbach’s alphas and correlations suggest that the scale does measure four factors that are distinctly different from one another. It is a key step in the measurement of brand equity in team sport to have a concise instrument that can reliably measure brand equity at the individual level.

The BETS originally included three items measuring the strength, favorability, and uniqueness of the history/tradition brand association (as a non-product related attribute). After testing the validity and reliability of the BETS including these three items, Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) found that the association was highly correlated with the nostalgia association. The authors eliminated this whole association from their subsequent investigations. These items were initially included in this study. However, after running the item-to-total correlations, the historical favorability item was more
highly correlated with the benefits factor than with its own factor. The historical uniqueness item was more highly correlated with the product related attributes factor than with its own factor.

These results taken in conjunction with Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt’s (2005) results suggest that the history items do not add any additional knowledge to the study of brand equity and so they were eliminated. That is, none of the analyses included the three items measuring the history association.

It is unclear why these items do not load on the non-product related brand attributes. The team utilized in this study possesses a long and storied history. It boasts six Heisman Trophy winners, several national championships, and one of the greatest rivalries in college football. It is possible that the sample used in this study contributed to the problems with the history items. The subjects were all college students who perhaps do not have the same appreciation for a team’s history and tradition that older fans might have. Thus, these items could still be useful in additional studies of team brand equity.

The authors of the BETS note that they followed Gladden and Funk (2001) and did not include attitudes despite those being one of Keller’s (1993) types of brand associations (along with attributes and benefits). They surmised that consumer attitudes would be determined by the attribute and benefit factors. It is possible that a measure of brand attitudes could be an important and distinct factor in team sport brand equity, or if they are determined by attributes and benefits, perhaps additional attitudinal items could increase the robustness of those factors, or be utilized as a measure of concurrent validity.
BRAND UNCERTAINTY SITUATIONS

As discussed in Chapter 1, Raggio and Leone (2005) proposed that measuring an individual’s brand equity would be easier if they were faced with a brand uncertainty situation in order to “activate” their brand equity. These conditions of uncertainty force a consumer to think about their brand decisions. Consumers faced with brand uncertainty situations must identify their consideration set and determine if they are willing to make the same decision they’ve made in the past or if they are going to try a different product or service. By presenting consumers with brand uncertainty situations, researchers can activate consumers’ brand equity. This activation can reduce the effects of alternative explanations, such as habit, inertia, or a lack of viable alternatives, which are often inadvertently included in brand equity measures.

This study presented consumers with a brand uncertainty situation through the use of fictitious articles describing positive or negative product change situations or positive or negative word of mouth situations regarding the collegiate football team under investigation. Subjects in one of the four treatment groups received one of these articles, whereas a control group received no article. Hypothesis 1 stated that the control group’s posttest brand equity scores would not change significantly from their pretest scores because their brand equity was not being activated. The results are inconclusive for this hypothesis. The control group’s mean scores (pretest overall brand equity, $M = 5.78$; posttest overall brand equity, $M = 5.88$) did not change significantly, but it is unclear as to whether the lack of activation was responsible due to the fact that the other groups mean scores also did not differ significantly after the treatment.
The control and treatment groups had very strong brand equity on the pretest. This suggests that activation (or treatment) may not have been strong enough to truly make a difference in their perceptions of brand equity. It is reasonable to think that consumers with strong brand equity will require more than just one newspaper article to “activate” their equity. The incredibly high score on the awareness factor also lends credence to this idea; obviously the sample is quite knowledgeable about the team and has most likely been exposed to numerous reports of the team’s positive prospects for the upcoming year.

Another possible explanation is that activation may not be necessary for measuring team sport brand equity. The branding of sport organizations is not necessarily the same as branding a consumer product (Ross, 2006), so it is possible that the concept of activation may not be necessary in such contexts. In general, consumers tend to develop deeper, more emotional connections to their sports teams than to their favorite cereal. Perhaps when attempting to measure brand equity among consumers who have bonded with the brand, researchers do not have to “activate” their brand equity because it is more easily accessed. This aspect of Raggio and Leone’s (2005) theory on brand equity needs to be investigated further to determine whether activation of brand equity can make a difference in the measurement of individual’s brand equity for a sports team.

BRAND ASSOCIATIONS & BRAND EQUITY

Brand associations are anything that connects the consumer to the brand; they can include usage and user imagery, product attributes and benefits, attitudes about the brand, perceptions of the brand’s personality, logos, and symbols. These associations become linked to the brand in the consumers mind. This is where brand equity is created and
where it exists – in the mind of the consumer. “The power of a brand lies in what consumers have learned, felt, seen, and heard about the brand over time” (Keller, 2001a, p. 14). For the associations to be significant for the brand, they must be strong, favorable and unique (Keller, 1993).

This study investigated the strength, favorability and uniqueness of a collegiate football team’s brand equity among students at the team’s university. The results indicate that students at this university hold very strong brand equity for the football team. The data was significantly negatively skewed suggesting that nearly all of the 141 participants had scores above the midpoint on the 7-point scale on all the factors: awareness ($M = 6.63$), product related attributes ($M = 5.64$), non-product related attributes ($M = 5.99$), brand benefits ($M = 4.83$), and overall brand equity ($M = 5.77$). The extremely high scores on the awareness factor highlight how prevalent the football team is on campus. Nearly all students were very familiar with the team, even those who did not hold strong brand equity for the team scored highly on the awareness factor. In fact, out of 141 subjects, only seven had a mean score of below 5.5 on the awareness factor. For a large campus, the football team may serve as common ground for students who may be very different (Hollingsworth & Waite, 2005). Because of the popularity of the football team across campus, even those who don’t care or who dislike the team or sport are still very aware of the team.

After awareness, non-product related attributes had the highest mean score. The brand associations included in this factor are the logo design, the stadium, the atmosphere at home games, and the regional importance. These four associations are all very unique to a specific team and are nearly impossible to duplicate by any other team. In college
football where the players (a product related attribute) change regularly, one can certainly see how it is possible that non-product related attributes are more important to these fans. The stadium and the atmosphere at home games are also associations that can produce very strong positive feelings, regardless of the team’s ability level that year. Also, these are associations that may be more tangible to consumers than the others factors. Consumers can purchase the logo and wear it on their clothes, put it on their car, and decorate their home with it. Also, consumers who attend games have direct contact with the stadium and are a part of the atmosphere at home games. They may feel that they are contributing to the atmosphere, and possibly to the efforts of the team on the field. Thus, consumers may feel some ownership of these attributes that they cannot get from the other factors, even the product related attributes. Consumers rarely have direct contact with players, the head coach, or the athletic department (product related attributes), so these associations may not be as important to them.

The nature of spectator sport means that consumers receive no tangible benefits from the experience, and the spectators are not guaranteed that the product itself will satisfy them (by winning). Sport marketers have to find ways to make the experience enjoyable regardless of whether or not the team wins. By making the stadium, and especially the atmosphere at home games entertaining, spectators can still have a positive experience even when the team loses. This doesn’t often happen in many other service industries. For example, a man who goes to a restaurant for dinner expects that his meal is going to be good and if it is not, regardless of the atmosphere, the overall experience will most likely be a disappointment. The results of this study indicate that non-product related attributes received very high scores for this team, which is good news for their
sport managers because they do not have any control over the players, the coaches, or the athletic success of the team, but they can help shape stadium atmosphere, the role the team plays in the community, and sometimes even the logo and stadium design. This should give sport marketers some insight into what associations they should be focusing on in order to create strong, positive experiences for their consumers.

These results indicate that brand equity might be more stable than other outcome variables that affect consumers of sports. The mean scores in this study suggest the product itself (the game, the players, etc.) is not the highest rated factor of brand equity. However, previous research on customer satisfaction at sporting events indicates that the core product (the game outcome) was the most important factor in predicting future behavior such as intent to return (Greenwell, Fink, & Pastore, 2002; Trail, Fink, & Anderson, 2002). It seems that consumers’ brand equity (which is comprised of more than just the product) is less likely than customer satisfaction or attendance intentions to change just because a team is winning or losing. This emphasizes the important role that brand equity can play in the long-term success of a sport organization. We would expect brand equity to influence attendance, but the study did not test this contention.

The other two factors that comprise brand equity, product related attributes and brand benefits also had very high mean scores. As previous research has shown the product itself is a very important factor in consumers’ evaluations of sports teams. The athletic success can certainly draw in new consumers because people enjoy supporting a winner. Success also generates publicity, which can encourage new consumers to start to pay attention to the team and to want to attend their games and watch them on TV. For example, the Chicago White Sox (MLB) won the World Series in 2005, and during that
season, their attendance rose 21% over the 2004 season. In addition, before the 2006 season even began, the White Sox had sold out of their season tickets, nearly doubling the size of their season ticket base from the previous season (21,500 - up from 12,000 at the start of 2005) (About.com, 2006).

The star players also can generate publicity and entice new consumers to pay attention to a team. For example, with the drafting of local star LeBron James, the Cleveland Cavaliers have enjoyed franchise records in attendance and attention. James has been in the league for three years. Those years account for three of the top five seasons in terms of sellouts for the franchise. In addition to attendance, the Cavs have experienced record levels of attention on national TV (31 games broadcast on national TV for the second consecutive season), as well as on the internet (James’ player page on www.cavs.com received over 1.8 million visitors – top five among all NBA players), and in terms of merchandise (James’ jersey is ranked second among the league’s best-selling player jerseys) since James joined the team (NBA.com, 2006).

Additionally, the head coach and the athletic department can increase the profile of a team and draw new consumers to the team. Robinson and Miller (2003) found that adding Bobby Knight as the head coach of the Texas Tech men’s basketball team generated increases in attendance, donations to the athletic department, and corporate sponsorship dollars. These examples illustrate that product related attributes are very important to consumers and can help build brand equity for the sport organization.

The brand benefits factor, while still above the mid-point of the scale, had the lowest mean score. This seems to indicate that while fan identification, interest of friends and family, nostalgia and escape are important to this team in terms of brand equity,
they are not ranked as high as the other associations. It is interesting that the benefits were not ranked as high as awareness, non-product related attributes, and product related attributes. Perhaps the brand benefit associations are not as salient in consumers’ evaluations because they are more abstract than the others.

OUTCOMES OF BRAND EQUITY

Despite the challenges facing brand equity research, it is a fruitful area of investigation for marketers and managers from all types of industries because the potential advantages of strong brands are plenty. As discussed in Chapter 1, Raggio and Leone (2005) indicate that brand equity results in biased processing of information and brand beliefs that are resistant to change; the stronger the consumer’s brand equity, the more resistant to change those beliefs are. Hypothesis 2 stated that scores on the posttest brand equity measure will be significantly more affected (positively or negatively) by brand uncertainty situations for those who have lower initial levels of brand equity than those with higher levels. This hypothesis was partially supported. The positive and negative product changes and the positive and negative word of mouth situations had no effect on our subjects, who had incredibly high levels of brand equity for the team involved in the study. These results support previous research showing consumers with strong brand equity process information with a bias in favor of the brand and have brand attitudes that are resistant to change. These subjects read either a positive or negative article about the team, but the information did not alter their brand equity.

Research has shown that brands with committed customers are more likely to counter-argue negative information and weather product harm crises (Hoeffler & Keller, 2003). Many of the subjects who read negative information were probably able to
counter, discount or disregard the information in their head, so their brand equity was resistant to that information. Hoeffler and Keller (2003) note that when consumers are faced with ambiguous information, they use their prior attitudes to make evaluations about the brand. While the information presented in the articles was not necessarily ambiguous, the subjects may have relied more heavily on their prior attitudes, rather than the article’s contents, to evaluate their beliefs about the brand. It is possible that they did not agree with the information, especially the negative articles, and so they chose to rely on their prior attitudes, rather than the news article. The positive articles may have just reinforced their attitudes, and because it was already so high, brand equity could not go any higher.

The literature on brand equity suggests that strong brand equity is persistent over time and is not susceptible to competitive marketing claims, word of mouth or product harm crises. This study used only one news article, so it is likely that one newspaper article would not be enough to alter those previously held beliefs. If consumers believed the negative information, they would probably still not change their attitudes about the brand because it would not fit with what they believe. They would probably attempt to rationalize the information and counter that it does not make a difference to them. This study definitely supports previous research on the benefits and outcomes of brand equity among those with strong brand equity.

Because nearly all of the subjects scored high on the brand equity factors, it was not possible to evaluate what impact the brand uncertainty situations had on those with weaker equity. The researcher now realizes the study should have included an assessment of brand equity for a team that possesses lower levels of brand equity (e.g.,
Bowling Green, Ohio University, etc.) in order to better assess the effects of a brand
uncertainty situation. Future studies on brand equity should be designed to ensure that
there is variance in subjects’ initial levels of brand equity.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Although no gender specific hypotheses were proposed, post-hoc analyses were
run due to gender differences in the pretest measures of brand equity. Men and women
differed significantly ($F_{(4,136)} = 5.63, p < .001$) on three of the five factor mean scores,
with men having higher means on all factors. There was a significant difference on the
product related attributes factor ($F_{(1, 140)} = 6.11, p < .05$), with gender accounting for 4.2%
of the variance in mean scores. The brand benefits factor was also significantly different
($F_{(1, 140)} = 11.86, p < .01$), with gender accounting for 8% of the variance. The final
significant difference was on the overall brand equity measure ($F_{(1, 140)} = 4.36, p < .05$),
with gender accounting for 4% of the variance. These differences suggest that perhaps
women form brand associations differently than men.

The product related attributes include the team’s athletic success, the star
player(s), the head coach, and the athletic department. Previous research on gender
differences in sport spectatorship and consumption has found that women are motivated
by family and social motives to attend college basketball games, more so than men who
are motivated by the drama and aesthetic reasons (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2002).
Swanson, Gwinner, Larson and Swindler (2003) had similar results as women were more
motivated to attend sporting events to satisfy communal or social needs while men were
more driven by achievement needs. It is possible that those findings could extend to how
women evaluate a sports team as a brand. Perhaps the team’s success, the star players,
the coach and the athletic department are less important to women in their overall evaluation of the brand. Past research also finds that women are more likely to be loyal to a team regardless of wins and losses (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002). This could be another possible explanation for the differences among men and women on the product related attribute factor. These associations may be more important to men than to women in the overall evaluation of the team brand.

A possible explanation for women’s lower scores on the brand benefits factor might be the social motivations of women to attend sporting events. This factor attempts to measure the benefits that a consumer receives from the brand. The brand associations for this factor include fan identification, the interest of friends and family, nostalgia and escape. Several authors have shown that women are more likely to attend sporting events to spend time with family and friends, whereas men are more motivated by fan identification, entertainment, self-esteem, and escape (Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Wann & Waddill, 2003; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999; Wann, 1995). Thus, it is possible that women might rate the interest of friends and family association higher than men, but the other aspects contributing to this factor, identification, nostalgia and escape may be of less importance to them than the men.

The women also differed significantly from men on the overall brand equity mean, which seems logical given that they were significantly different on two of the four factors. While still high, women held weaker overall brand equity for the football team than men. Previous research has shown that women are perceived to have less interest in spectator sports than men (Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End, & Jacquemotte, 2000) and that men report greater interest than women (James & Ridinger, 2002; Wann, Melnick, Russell, &
Because women are generally less interested than men in sports, it is logical that they would probably have weaker brand equity than men. Individuals who are less interested in any product category are less likely than those with high interest to hold strong brand equity for the product because it is not as important to them.

The women scored lower on product related attributes and brand benefits indicating that they are less influenced by these factors. Because women are often less interested in sports than men, the product related attributes are probably less influential to women. They seem not to care as much about the athletic success, the star players, the head coach and the athletic department. Also, because women’s motives for attending tend to be more social and focused on friends and family, women seem to be less affected by the other brand benefits (identification, nostalgia, and escape) than men.

Analyses were undertaken to investigate a gender by treatment interaction effect on brand equity posttest scores. The ANCOVA on the product related attributes was significant, $F_{(1,140)} = 3.12, p = 0.017$, and the gender-treatment interaction explained nearly 9% of the variance. As previously mentioned, women’s evaluations of the product related attributes were lower than men’s evaluations of these associations. The treatments manipulated situations involving athletic success and a starting player, both product related attributes. The results indicate that women were affected significantly on this factor due to the treatment.

Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) note research that finds women are less likely to consume sport media. Additionally, women spent fewer hours reading about sport and watching sport on TV and were generally less knowledgeable about sport than men. Fink, Trail, and Anderson (2002) found that “women were less likely to utilize print
media to get information about the team and were less likely to track statistics” (p. 17). Given this background, perhaps it is possible that the women in this study were more affected by the articles because, unlike the men, they do not consistently read stories about the football team. Thus, they may have been more likely to be swayed by one newspaper article. Men, on the other hand, may more consistently read about the team, thus possessing a stronger “arsenal” of previous information that would be more difficult to change with just one intervention.

Future research into the gender differences on how team sport brand equity is created and maintained is necessary and potentially fruitful.

LIMITATIONS & DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this study were outlined in Chapter 1, but will be discussed here in relation to the results. As Kerlinger and Lee (2000) argue, experimental research often has less external validity than does field research. It is possible that the experimental nature of this study affected the way the subjects responded to the brand equity measure. However, this setting allowed for tighter control over internal factors that could have threatened the validity of the findings. Using fictional scenarios and articles could also be considered a limitation, but they were necessary to ensure proper manipulation of the independent variable. The fictional scenarios were situations that could occur in the real world. Also, a manipulation check was run to ensure that the articles would be able to produce different effects among readers. Future researchers could use real-world situations and actual news articles to measure possible effects on brand equity, but in this setting a baseline measurement of brand equity would not be obtainable. The pretest part of the design can also be considered a limitation because
subjects could have been biased by taking the BETS in the previous week. Again, the need for a baseline brand equity measurement outweighed this concern. Also, there were no right or wrong answers on the scale, so the participants could not “learn” anything from the pretest to apply to the posttest.

Because this study occurred over a very short period of time and with only one uncertainty situation, there is no way to gauge the effects of repeated exposure to such situations. If consumers are constantly hearing, seeing, or reading negative (or positive) information about a team, their brand equity levels may change over time. Some teams or athletes have repeatedly gotten into trouble or had negative exposure; it is possible that the accumulation of this information can ultimately change an individual’s brand equity. For example, one rumor or news story about an athlete taking steroids may not affect consumers with strong brand equity, but if the rumors and stories continue, the brand equity may be diminished over time. Future brand equity research may want to undertake a longitudinal study to track how individuals’ brand equity increases and decreases over time and what situations produce those changes.

The most important limitation of this study is probably the lack of brand equity variance among the subjects. As previously mentioned, nearly all of the subjects held strong brand equity for the football team. It was surmised that using a variety of SFHP classes would provide a wider range of brand equity levels than was actually achieved. The results obtained for those with higher levels of brand equity are important, and do support previous research findings on the benefits of brand equity. However, future research should incorporate additional teams into the measurement. By collecting brand equity information on different teams at the same time, the data would be more varied;
there would be comparisons to be made among the teams, and it would be more likely that subjects would not all have strong brand equity for the teams under investigation, which would allow for a more robust analysis of the data.

As discussed previously in this chapter, the difference between genders was not proposed and was not a focus of this study originally. However, gender differences did arise, both on how the team brand is evaluated and how brand equity can be affected by brand uncertainty situations. This is an area that should be researched further. It has been established that women and men are not always motivated by the same factors when attending or consuming sports, but future research should investigate how men and women differ with regards to how brand equity is developed and how it can be affected.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

As previously discussed, the results of this study indicate that individuals with strong brand equity are resistant to change when faced with a brand uncertainty situation. Situations similar to those used in this study occur frequently in sports and they can be difficult for sport managers to control. Knowing that one occurrence should not affect consumers with strong brand equity, marketers can focus on building brand equity through positive associations, rather than devote time and energy trying to counter or neutralize such situations. As mentioned previously, brand equity is something that is built over time, and does not seem to be something that can be erased very quickly. Sport managers and marketers should take a long-run approach to building relationships with the team’s consumers and the brand.

Marketers need to recognize that their consumers with strong brand equity are more likely to have persistent attitudes that are resistant to change, which is good when
facing negative situations, but it can also be difficult when trying to institute change. For example, season-ticket holders for a team that is building a new venue may be resistant to the idea that their seats are going to have to change, that the building is going to change, and that the whole experience of going to the games is probably going to change. These changes can be hard for some people. It is the sport marketer’s (and really the whole organization’s) job to ensure that these consumers develop new positive associations once inside the new venue. It can’t just be accepted that because these individuals have strong brand equity for the team the organization does not need to do any work to maintain that brand equity. For example, The Ohio State University recently changed the look of the football team’s jerseys, which included removing the gray color from the jersey altogether. Many of the fans were outraged and assumed that the athletic department did this solely to sell more merchandise and did not take into account the fans’ opinions or the tradition of having scarlet and gray jerseys. This was announced without any prior indication that the jersey would change, so the seemingly sudden change was too much for fans to take. Perhaps if the athletic department had consulted with their fans ahead of time, they would have discovered how important the gray was to fans. Also, the athletic department explained that the change was because of the use of an advanced new fabric, which had been planned for over a year. If the athletic department had prepared the fans in advance that such a change was in the works, perhaps the outrage would not have been so great.

Also, because one instance did not have a significant effect on the strength of subjects’ brand equity, marketers should realize that one positive article or one positive promotion may not make an impact; they should be aiming to have these types of positive
associations occur frequently in order to build and leverage brand equity. Again, brand equity is something that accumulates over time and does not often diminish quickly. Marketers need to make sure that the team, the experience of going to games and watching them on TV, and the extensions (clothing, other merchandise and paraphernalia) all work together to present a coherent message and image that over time becomes part of the consumers’ brand equity.

It is possible that the age of the team impacts how much effect these uncertain situations have on brand equity. For an established team, there are many more associations that consumers have stored in their memory than for a new or expansion team. The consumers can reason with themselves that one negative instance for an established team is simply an aberration. For a new team with much less history (and consumer brand experience), one negative situation can perhaps make a bigger impact because consumers have less prior knowledge upon which to rely.

The Cleveland Browns serve as an interesting example in professional sports of an expansion team that has been viewed as a more established team because it kept its brand identity when the original team left town. The city negotiated that they would keep the team moniker, the same colors, etc. when the actual team was moved to Baltimore by owner Art Moddell. Thus, while the city had no football team for a few years, when they were awarded an expansion team, Cleveland once again had their Browns. The players and coaches were different, but everything else remained the same. Thus, the Browns are able to rely on that strong brand equity that fans held for the original team, especially in trying times. They have struggled to become a winning team on the field and have gone through many players and coaches in the new era. However, fans continue to support
them. This could serve as an interesting area for future research in terms of how brand equity is affected by brand uncertainty situations for established versus expansion teams.

The gender differences raise questions for marketers in how they go about building and leveraging brand equity among the male and female consumers. Men and women differ on what associations are important to their brand equity. They also differ on what impact brand uncertainty situations can have on their brand equity. The results of this study suggest that sport marketers need to develop different approaches in developing brand equity, as well as different approaches in handling uncertainty situations with respect to gender.

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to investigate the effects that brand uncertainty situations had on consumer-based brand equity in college athletics. It was proposed that those with strong brand equity would not be affected by the situation and those with weak brand equity would be affected positively by positive articles and negatively by negative articles. The results support the first half of that proposition and with a lack of subjects with weak brand equity, the second half is inconclusive. This study was one of the few that have attempted to measure brand equity for a team sport at the individual level. It advances the study of brand equity in support of Keller’s (1993) original framework of customer-based brand equity, and previous research findings on the benefits of brand equity. The study also provides support for using Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt’s (2005) BETS scale as a multi-dimensional, customer-based brand equity measure in a team sport setting. While the scale could benefit from further refinement, it is forward progress since the field has struggled to develop a generally accepted brand equity measurement.
Brand equity has been an area of great interest for marketers from all types of industries. There are so many potential benefits to building a strong brand with which consumers develop relationships that research will continue to be conducted. The results of this study indicate that those with strong brand equity for a team are less likely to change their beliefs on the basis of one brand uncertainty situation. This is important as sport organizations face more competition for consumers’ entertainment dollars, more attention from 24-hour sports channels and the internet, and more potential crises (whether from players taking steroids, athletes and schools violating NCAA rules, and many other scandals) every day. Sport marketers have to strategically build their brand in order to insulate it from the volatility of competitive sports, but also from the crises that can arise.

As Gladden and Milne (1999) and Bauer, Sauer, and Schmitt (2005) found, brand equity can play a vital role, often more important than winning, in the economic success of athletic teams. A losing season doesn’t have to mean losing profits as well, but a winning season may not ensure profits either. The team brand has to connect with its consumers and develop a bond so that consumers stick with the team through thick and thin. This is the role of sport managers who recognize the importance of the brand. Clearly these findings have implications for sport marketers who are responsible for developing and maintaining a strong brand amidst fierce competition.


APPENDIX A

AAKER’S (1991) MODEL OF BRAND EQUITY
APPENDIX B

KELLER’S (1993) MODEL OF BRAND KNOWLEDGE
Dimensions of Brand Knowledge

BRAND KNOWLEDGE

BRAND AWARENESS
- Brand Recall
- Brand Recognition

BRAND IMAGE
- Favorability of Brand Associations
- Strength of Brand Associations
- Uniqueness of Brand Associations

Attributes
- Non-Product Related
- Product-Related

Usage Imagery

Benefit
- Functional
- Experiential
- Symbolic

Price
- Packaging
- User Imagery
APPENDIX C

RAGGIO & LEONE’S (2005) MODEL OF BRAND EQUITY
APPENDIX D

FICTIONAL BRAND UNCERTAINTY SCENARIO – NEGATIVE PRODUCT CHANGE
Boone Suspended for 2006 Season
Ohio State sophomore tackle tests positive for banned substance

April 26, 2006

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – Ohio State left tackle Alex Boone was suspended for the 2006 season Wednesday for violating NCAA rules regarding banned substances. The NCAA informed Ohio State officials two weeks ago Boone tested positive for a banned substance during a random drug screening.

Boone, who played well as a true freshman in 2005 and was projected to be the starter at left tackle, will be ineligible for his sophomore season. This suspension could be a serious concern for the Buckeyes offense. The left tackle is arguably the most important position on the line because it is his job to protect the quarterback’s blind side. Boone was also slated to be the backup center, a position that is now sorely lacking depth with the departure of senior Nick Mangold. Boone was Ohio State’s highest rated recruit from the class of 2005.

Head Coach Jim Tressel would not comment on which of Ohio State’s two redshirt freshmen--neither of whom has ever played a minute in a collegiate contest--would fill out the Buckeyes offensive line.

“They’re young but they’ll both get a lot of reps in practice and we’ll evaluate from there,” he said. “Right now the team’s thoughts are with Alex and his family.”

The university appealed on behalf of Boone, but yesterday that appeal was denied.

“We are saddened by this news,” Ohio State Director of Athletics, Gene Smith said.

The NCAA’s list of banned substances includes stimulants (e.g., cocaine, amphetamines), steroids and other anabolic agents, diuretics, street drugs (e.g., marijuana, heroin), peptide hormones and analogues.

The NCAA can randomly test student-athletes before during or after their competitive seasons but does not release the names of substances found during these analyses. Any student-athlete testing positive is automatically suspended for 365 days.
APPENDIX E

FICTITIOUS BRAND UNCERTAINTY SCENARIO – POSITIVE PRODUCT CHANGE
Pittman Expected to Shimmer for Ohio State
Junior expected to star as next Buckeye great

April 26, 2006

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – Despite being months until the first football game, coaches and fans alike are heralding the emergence of junior Antonio Pittman, Ohio State’s newest star in the backfield.

Last season as sophomore, Antonio Pittman ran well, but didn’t score a touchdown until the eighth game at Minnesota. He started all twelve games and totaled 1,331 yards and seven touchdowns on 243 carries. He finished 2005 ranked 11th nationally in rushing, but he should contend for the top spot in 2006.

Head coach Jim Tressel points out that his natural talent and poise are finally starting to emerge, “He knows the game and more importantly, our system and has progressed very rapidly. “He played well last season, but he has a lot of talent and we think he’s going to be even better this season.”

Coming out of high school, Pittman knew that playing college football was going to be more difficult, but he didn’t realize the toll that the pounding would take on his body. So, after he struggled his freshman year, he dedicated himself to improving his durability, both physical and mental. He improved his off-season workouts and added 15 pounds of muscle by the start of camp last season.

“He was dedicated to learning the system and developing his skills as a collegiate back.” said running backs coach Dick Tressel. “He proved to the coaching staff that he deserved to be the starter as a sophomore amidst serious competition and that speaks volumes about both his skill and character. “That’s the kind of guy you want as a teammate.”

Pittman has shown a great deal of growth over the past two years and 2006 should be his best season yet. With the talent and skill he has shown, Pittman could rush for over 2,000 yards and just might win the Heisman Trophy as a junior.

Ohio State has been the training ground for prototypical standout tailbacks including Heisman Trophy winners Archie Griffin and Eddie George. George, a former first round draft pick, spent a great deal of time around the Buckeyes last season and believes that fans have good reason to be excited to see Pittman next season.

“He is really talented and worked hard last year to improve. He is definitely going to be a lot of fun to watch this season.”
APPENDIX F

FICTITIOUS BRAND UNCERTAINTY SCENARIO – NEGATIVE WORD OF MOUTH
Down Year Forecast for Ohio State Football
College football experts place Buckeyes in middle of Big Ten

April 26, 2006

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – After carding an exciting 10-2 season and win against Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl in 2005, critics do not expect Ohio State to match that success, picking them to finish no higher than fifth in the Big Ten Conference this year.

The Buckeyes return the bulk of an offense that ranked sixth in the nation in passing efficiency, but lose 10 of their defensive starters, as well as their fantastic place kicker. Most of the defense will lack any significant playing experience, especially at key positions like linebacker, safety, and cornerback. Playing in a conference like the Big Ten, defense is the key to success and the Buckeyes just won’t have much of that this season.

While the official preseason rankings won’t be out for months, Ohio State is picked to finish behind Michigan, Penn State, Wisconsin and Purdue by all major publications.

“With its defense being such an unknown, there is no way Ohio State can contend for the Big Ten this year,” said Sports Illustrated’s Austen Murphy.

Agreeing with Murphy is the majority of college football writers, including ESPN’s Ivan Maisel.

“Their offense will keep them in games but the rest of the conference is too strong on both sides of the ball.” Maisel said. “They’ll need to put a lot of points on the board, because that untested defense just won’t be able to stop the offensive power in the Big Ten. “They just don’t have much chance to win if they can’t stop their opponent.”

Rarely do the experts agree, but it seems clear the Buckeyes will struggle this season and it could be another sobering year for college football in Columbus, Ohio.
APPENDIX G

FICTITIOUS BRAND UNCERTAINTY SCENARIO – POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH
Buckeyes Ready for Another Fiesta
College football experts agree OSU could gain berth in BCS title game

April 26, 2006

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – With a favorable schedule, an explosive offense, and top recruits that will challenge for playing time, Ohio State appears to have a legitimate path back to Tempe, Arizona, site for this season’s Bowl Championship Series title match.

The Buckeyes, coming off a stellar 10-2 season that culminated with a Fiesta Bowl victory, return three defensive and nine offensive starters, including quarterback Troy Smith, tailback Antonio Pittman, and perhaps the most explosive player in college football wide receiver/kick returner Ted Ginn, Jr.

While the official preseason rankings won’t be out for months, pundits are in agreement that Ohio State will play for a National Championship again, last winning the title bout in 2002 with a 31-24 double overtime Tostitos Fiesta Bowl victory over top-ranked and heavily favored Miami.

“They are loaded on offense and Ohio State always has a solid defense” said Sports Illustrated’s Austen Murphy. “There is no doubt in my mind if they play the way they are capable of, Ohio State will win the Big Ten and cruise into Tempe unblemished.”

Agreeing with Murphy is the majority of college football writers, including ESPN’s Ivan Maisel.

“In 2002, they won mostly on guts and executing within their system,” Maisel said. “This team has that same heart, but way more talent.”

The Buckeyes will be tested early at defending national champion Texas, but play host to Penn State, Minnesota, and Michigan during the Big Ten campaign.

OSU has won seven national championships and played in 13 Rose Bowl games, last winning “The Granddaddy of Them All” in 1997 against Arizona State. The Buckeyes have a perfect 4-0 record in BCS games. That figure tops all schools that have played in BCS games.
APPENDIX H

BETS QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

Please provide an alias for yourself in the space below. This should be a name that only you will know as your own. It can be a nickname or any name that you will be able to remember as yours for the next questionnaire. No one, including the researcher, will ask you for this name or be able to identify you with this name; it will simply be a way to identify your questionnaire while maintaining your anonymity. This alias will never be linked to your real name. It will be known only to you.

ALIAS: ___________________________

We are interested in your initial reactions to the following questions and statements. There is no “right” or “wrong” answer. Please place a check mark in the box that is most appropriate and proceed to the next question or statement. There are 4 pages to be completed.

Passive Brand Awareness:

Have you heard of the Ohio State Buckeyes football team?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Very often</th>
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How familiar are you with the Ohio State Buckeyes football team?

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<tr>
<th>Not at all familiar</th>
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<th></th>
<th>Very familiar</th>
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</table>
**Brand Image:**

What comes to mind when you hear: The Ohio State University Buckeyes football team?

| I think of ... | Totally disagree | | Totally agree |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| ... the ranking/athletic success of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... one or more star(s) of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the head coach of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the OSU athletic department. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the logo of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the stadium of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the atmosphere at a home game of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the team’s athletic history. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the significance of the team to this town. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... my bond with the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the interest in the team shown by my friends/family members. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... memories that the team brings back. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the chance to tune out/escape from everyday life. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |

What do you like about the Ohio State Buckeyes football team?

| I like ... | Totally disagree | | Totally agree |
|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| ... the present athletic success of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... one or more star(s) of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the head coach of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the OSU athletic department. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the logo of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the stadium of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the atmosphere at a home game of the team. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
| ... the team’s athletic history. | ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ |
I like ...

| |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Totally disagree** | **** | **** | **** | **** | **Totally agree** |
| ... the importance of the team to this town. | | | | | |
| ... my attachment to the team. | | | | | |
| ... the interest shown in the team by my friends/family members. | | | | | |
| ... memories that the team brings back. | | | | | |
| ... the chance to tune out/escape from everyday life. | | | | | |

What do you consider unique about the Ohio State University Buckeyes football team?

| I consider as unique ... |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Totally disagree** | **** | **** | **** | **** | **Totally agree** |
| ... the present athletic success of the team. | | | | | |
| ... one or more star(s) of the team. | | | | | |
| ... the head coach of the team. | | | | | |
| ... the OSU athletic department. | | | | | |
| ... the logo of the team. | | | | | |
| ... the stadium of the team. | | | | | |
| ... the atmosphere at a home game of the team. | | | | | |
| ... the team’s athletic history. | | | | | |
| ... the importance of the team to this town. | | | | | |
| ... my attachment to the team. | | | | | |
| ... the interest shown in the club by my friends/family members. | | | | | |
| ... memories that the team brings back. | | | | | |
| ... the chance to tune out/escape from everyday life. | | | | | |
**Fan Identification:**

I would experience a loss if I had to stop being a fan of the Buckeyes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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I consider myself to be a “real” fan of the Buckeyes.

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<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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Being a fan of the Buckeyes is very important to me.

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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

Please indicate your gender:

- [X] MALE
- [ ] FEMALE

You have now completed the questionnaire.
Thank you very much for your time.