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Table of Contents

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	iii
DISCLAIMER.....	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	v
PREFACE.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
TRENDS IN RESEARCH.....	3
RECRUITING CHALLENGES.....	6
MARKETING PRINCIPLES.....	11
MARKETING ANALYTICS.....	14
CONSUMER BEHAVIOR.....	17
CONCLUSION.....	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	28

List of Figures

	Page
PROPENSITY TO SERVE FROM YEARS 2000 – 2008.....	24
THE PROPOSED ARNG BRAND EQUITY MODEL.....	25

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Executive Summary

Title: Measuring the Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

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Thesis: A marketing and advertising evaluation method that focuses solely on the number of recruits gained is narrowly focused and does not accurately measure the effectiveness of all efforts. A brand equity construct should serve as a means to evaluate military marketing effectiveness in such a way that is useful and relevant.

Discussion: There are numerous academic publications on measuring the effectiveness of traditional marketing and advertising for both profit-based and non-profit organizations. However, there is too little information available to provide usable analysis on how the military can accurately measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts. Existing research illustrates an extremely complex method of evaluation difficult to apply at the user level. As such, the natural tendency is to rely on the research and theories that are available and apply these principles to military recruitment. Generally speaking, the drawback to this methodology is the difference in the buying behavior with military recruiting. The Army National Guard (ARNG) faces strong recruiting challenges. Marketing strategies must address ways to tackle these challenges with a corresponding evaluation method that accurately illustrates effects. Propensity is at a current all-time low, automatic disqualifiers are at an all-time high, and achieving acceptable Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) rates are more difficult than ever. It is important that leaders understand that military recruiting must adhere to an application of basic marketing principles: segmentation, positioning, and targeting. A metric that measures marketing effectiveness should account for these basic principles and how they complement each other in practice. The narrowly focused metric does not properly account for complementary efforts of multiple advertising campaigns. Furthermore, consumer behavior theories such the rule of seven, brand familiarity, and consumer confidence help support a more comprehensive approach to evaluation. Return on investment measures such as impressions, engagement, and lead generation help give insight on how well an individual program is performing. While this evaluation tool can serve as a form of analysis, it should not be the sole metric to determine overall effectiveness.

Conclusion: With the complexities of maintaining a national marketing strategy, providing oversight on local activities, and the challenges faced in today's recruiting environment, the ARNG must adopt a philosophy of marketing that is complimented by the techniques used to deliver their message. All recruiting and retention efforts should be considered a task within the organization's marketing strategy. An evaluation tool must take into account all marketing efforts. The proposed brand equity model does exactly this. This model takes a more comprehensive and strategic approach to measuring the effectiveness of marketing and advertising efforts. It recognizes the complexities and complimentary efforts of marketing. The following six key factors should drive the ARNG brand equity model: DoD market share, recruiting mission, retention mission, JAMRS survey data, diversity goals, and quality metrics.

Preface

Learning more about marketing and advertising, in general, has given me a greater appreciation for their complexity. Measuring the effects of marketing should be approached through the methods of science. However, marketers need a firm understanding and appreciation for consumer psychology and the creative process involved with campaign design. There are countless variables to consider when attempting to construct an effective strategy and measure its effects. This paper has helped me gain perspective on these two topics. Hopefully, the knowledge acquired will help my organization develop their strategic vision and a more analytical approach to marketing and advertising. I also hope this paper will give other leaders a more refined perspective and appreciation for military recruitment as it relates to marketing and advertising. Although this paper focus on the ARNG, it certainly has implications for other service components.

I would like to thank a few people who have been key to the success of this paper. First, I would like to thank Dr. Lynn Tesser and Dr. Edward Erickson, my MMS Mentor and Oral Defense Committee Member at USMC University. I am greatly appreciative for them allowing me to focus my efforts on what seems to be a less than traditional MMS topic. Second, I would like to thank Dr. Terrence Kroeten from Southern New Hampshire University. Dr. Kroeten has years of experience in the field of marketing, both at academically and at practical levels, which proved to be invaluable. Dr. Kroeten was a great source for the more technical aspects of this paper. Lastly, Mrs. Julie Muir from the National Guard Bureau, Marketing and Advertising Branch was a key player in helping me refine my ideas behind this paper and frame them to fit the ARNG. I'd like to also thank the Marine Corps University for providing all of the CSC students the opportunity to participate in a very challenging and rewarding MMS program.

Introduction

The US military spends a substantial amount of money on marketing and advertising each year. The US Army spent nearly \$250M and the US Army National Guard (ARNG) spent nearly \$150M in fiscal year 2014 on marketing and advertising programs.¹ With current budgetary constraints weighing heavily on military service components, it is imperative for senior leaders to have a well-supported analysis and justification on spending allocations. Furthermore, in order to reflect a fair stewardship of taxpayer dollars, marketing and advertising must be a calculated effort with a concentration on maximizing return on investment (ROI). This can be difficult for military professionals because marketing is not necessarily a traditional military discipline. As a result of this unfamiliarity, it can be difficult to express the importance of the organization's marketing strategy and advertising programs. There is a common misconception that all advertising programs should and can be evaluated solely by the number of recruits gained. Recent discussion between the National Guard Bureau and Congress has led to an assertion that the effectiveness of any given program should be measured by this single, narrowly focused metric. This paper will focus on the Army National Guard marketing efforts because of the attention it has gained from Congress and the media over the past three to four years.

Having a defensible evaluation method that can be realistically applied to a specific program or campaign is arguably one of the most important aspects of traditional advertising. The success of a program or campaign is commonly measured by its return on investment. As new and innovative opportunities rise in the competitive market, professional marketers are continuously researching methods to evaluate strategies, increase ROI, and measure overall success. Based on the research available, there are different evaluation approaches that can be

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

applied to a variety of specific types of advertising methods. There is a common theme in this research: an appropriate evaluation method should be applied to fit the specific marketing and advertising program. Not all programs or campaigns are created equal. Goals and expectations vary. Evaluating all programs with the exact same metric that does not truly capture the goals and expectations of that specific program is unwise.

There are numerous academic publications on measuring the effectiveness of traditional marketing and advertising for both profit-based and non-profit organizations alike. However, existing research focused on military advertising illustrates an extremely complex method of evaluation which makes it difficult to apply at the user level. As such, the natural tendency is to rely on the research and theories available and apply these principles to military recruitment. Generally speaking, the drawback to this methodology is the difference in the buying behavior that exists between those who are considering joining the military versus purchasing low-risk products or services. Furthermore, there is an inherent difference in how performance is measured between for-profit and non-profit based companies: the use of clear financial indicators to measure brand equity. With that said, there are common evaluation metrics that can be applied to both private-sector marketing and military recruitment. The gap in literature provides an important justification to the research and recommendations of this paper.

The goal of this paper is to develop an alternative evaluation metric, using a brand equity model, that can theoretically capture some of the shortfalls that other studies do not address. This paper will link a brand equity construct as a means to evaluate marketing effectiveness in such a way that is useful and relevant. The proposed brand equity model will include an analysis using factors that are readily available to the ARNG as a means to explain the effectiveness of their marketing efforts while considering the challenges faced today, basic marketing principles,

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

and consumer behavior theory. This brand equity metric can replace the narrowly metric method currently proposed by Congress and senior leaders. Six key strength maintenance factors will serve as the basis of measurement in the new brand equity model.

Branding is the strategic approach and process of making a brand recognizable. Brand awareness, perception, association, and loyalty are by-products of this process and serve as the four basic components of brand equity (see Figure 2).² Brand equity is an evaluation method that accounts for an organization's marketing efforts at the strategic level and is a common phrase used in marketing to describe the value of having a well-known brand. The effectiveness of the ARNG marketing and advertising efforts should be evaluated by the implementation of a modified brand equity model that is supported by an effective branding strategy.

Adherence to marketing principles is important because it serves as the foundation for an organization's marketing strategy. A metric that measures the effectiveness of marketing should account for these basic principles and how they complement each other in practice. Measuring the success of a single program by only the number of recruits gained does not take into account the complimentary effort of multiple advertisement campaigns. Furthermore, it does not offer the analysis required to manage a marketing plan from a strategic approach. Alternatively, a metric must capture the overall goals of the organization as it relates to a variety of factors.

The following areas will help us understand military marketing as a comprehensive effort and support the recommended equity model as a new metric. First, current recruiting challenges are analyzed to help illustrate how a brand equity metric can help account for both long-term and short-term effects. Second, basic marketing principles are highlighted in order to demonstrate the foundational aspects of a marketing strategy. Third, key consumer behavior theories and marketing analytics are examined as a means to further prove why a narrowly focused metric is

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

not an appropriate tool to measure effectiveness. Lastly, the ARNG brand equity model is examined in detail as well as an analysis of six key factors that will contribute to the proposed construct.

Trends in Research

Multiple military recruitment advertising studies between the 1980s and 2004 demonstrate empirical relationships as a means to evaluate the effectiveness of advertising. However, the studies do not demonstrate a useable model that can be applied at the agency/user level. This section will summarize eight studies on military advertising and demonstrate the need to close the gap in research with the proposed brand equity model offered in this paper. The studies show positive relationships between advertising and recruiting levels. They also illustrate the complex nature of military recruiting and measuring advertising effectiveness.

In the late 1980s, two RAND Corporation studies evaluated the effectiveness of army recruiting advertising.³ The study focused on compiling advertising data over a three-year period, which consisted of both local and national level programs. Overall, three conclusions emerged. First, army recruiting advertising had noticeable effects on enlistments in the short run. Second, cost effectiveness varied by different types of advertising. Lastly, the value of advertising was more favorable than compared to the cost of offering bonuses.⁴

In 1991, the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center (Navy PRDC) conducted research that found navy advertising to be an effective recruiting tool. The study also concludes that advertising is as cost-effective as additional recruiters. This study did not find evidence that joint advertising had a direct effect on navy enlistments. Both of the studies applied logarithmic linear models as a way to explain their findings. The studies considered a variety of factors that contribute to the overall success of the recruiting program.⁵

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

In 1993, US Navy Recruiting Command conducted a study on high-quality male contracts over a course of three years. The study analyzed the effects of national advertising spending but ignored the effects of local newspapers and local radio. This study lacked the in-depth analysis required to measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of all efforts as a whole. However, the report does suggest that joint magazine advertisements were effective in increasing high-quality contracts. Inversely, an increase in Joint T.V. and Navy radio advertisements actually demonstrated a decrease in high-quality contracts. This relationship suggests that the evaluation methods used are incomplete because they did not capture all advertising media.⁶ However, the US Navy conducted another study in 1996 that demonstrated very strong monthly data over a course of four years. Data included multiple regions across the US, in four different advertising mediums. The media examined was effective in increasing high-quality enlistments, but the effectiveness in different media depended on the specific evaluation method applied.⁷

In 2001, the Defense Manpower Data Center analyzed determinants of high-quality enlistments for four services using data from over a course of 10 years. The study focused efforts on incentives and not advertising. However, there was strong evidence that pointed to advertising having a significant impact on high-quality Army and Navy enlistments. There was no evidence that supported the same conclusion for the US Marine Corps or US Air Force. Major assumptions were made as part of this study that support the need for further research. They assumed that an increase in advertising in a specific month would have no effect on enlistments for that same month. The study also assumed that an increase in spending for one month would have the same effects on outcomes for each of the following 11 months.⁸ These assumptions entail a lack of specificity required when attempting to apply a model that explains

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

observed relationships and using this as a way to explain the highly complex area of military recruitment.

In 2003, the RAND Corporation published a research study that attempted to address several policy issues focused on the effectiveness of advertising and demonstrate which media was most cost-effective. As such, the research tried to fill in some of the gaps in previously mentioned studies. The research mentions four specific weaknesses in the data or models employed in previous studies: (1) too much aggregation of advertising data over time, space, and media; (2) estimates are forced to conform to improbable patterns; (3) dynamic specifications that are overly restrictive; (4) efforts of recruiters cannot be accurately calculated. The study found some relatively inconclusive results; pointing to data problems, major conceptual and econometric challenges. The authors concluded that unstable recruiting environments can contribute to the inability to evaluate advertising effectiveness. However, despite these challenges, authors of the study still believe that advertising is a cost-effective option and should continue as part of the Department of Defense's effort to promote military service.⁹

Finally, in 2004, The National Research Council conducted a study with the objective to help the DoD improve its research on advertising and recruiting policies. Its authors laid out an evaluation framework linking different types of research questions to different research methodologies. This study represented a shift in how previous studies were conducted because they focused on demonstrating how questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, and experiments can serve as another means to evaluate effectiveness. There were many conclusions and recommendations as a result of this test. A majority of the recommendations centered on

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

examining propensity and how the military could theoretically maintain or increase propensity through effective advertising.¹⁰

The non-DoD marketing community has shown increased attention to brand equity as a construct that can reflect the real value of a brand. Private-sector companies consider it important because brands are believed to be strong influencers of critical outcomes, such as sales and market share.¹¹ There are numerous academic publications and journals that attest to the value of using brand equity as a strategic approach to evaluate marketing and advertising effectiveness. It is also something that is not discussed in much detail within the DoD-based research available because it is a relatively new concept. There is potential to expand on this evaluation method as the primary metric to measure recruitment efforts and military marketing.

There is a wide range of research available that can be applied to measuring military marketing effectiveness, but they do not give a usable construct at the agency level. Multiple DoD studies demonstrated advertising to be an effective tool in recruiting high quality enlistments. Furthermore, the studies examined illustrate measuring advertising effectiveness as a complex problem that must account for a variety of factors.

Recruiting Challenges

The ARNG has consistently met its end-strength mission for the last decade and is expected to do so again this year (FY16). However, there are significant challenges that the recruiting force must overcome in order to accomplish their mission for the years ahead. This section will highlight four key recruiting challenges that the ARNG will face for the foreseeable future: (1) maintaining an acceptable quality level, (2) the decreased propensity for service, (3) describing the uniqueness of the ARNG mission, and (4) advertising as a way to maintain public

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

trust.¹² These challenges weigh heavily on today's recruiting force and an effective marketing strategy can have both direct and indirect influences on how potential recruits make decisions.

The U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) reported in August 2015, "Within the 71 percent of youth ineligible to join the Army, the three most common disqualifiers are obesity, medical issues, and drug use. Other disqualifiers include inadequate education, mental health challenges, and criminal history."¹³ As a way to help alleviate some of the impacts of these factors, the ARNG must implement a comprehensive marketing strategy as a way to effectively target their messaging in specific markets that might fit within the 29 percent of youth who could potentially be eligible for service.

As a method to ensure quality prospects are recruited into the military, the DoD allows a maximum of 4 percent of applicants who are in category IV, the second lowest Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) category.¹⁴ The military is increasingly concerned with recruiting individuals who meet certain high quality indicators such as the AFQT. Over the last 5 years, the ARNG has come well under the 4 percent threshold. Many recruiting commanders attribute this success to aggressive localized marketing and advertising campaigns. Having the ability to connect with the target market through a variety of different mediums is an important factor when attempting to recruit a highly qualified base.¹⁵ While using AFQT data alone to demonstrate the effectiveness of marketing efforts excludes other important factors, the use of AFQT data highlights how advertising and recruiter effort complement each other. The 1993 Schmitz and Boyer as well as the 1996 Hogan and Dall studies indicate a link between specific marketing efforts and an increase in high-quality contracts, while demonstrating a decrease in quality as a result of an increase in other forms of advertising mediums.¹⁶ This indicates a need to develop a metric that accounts for other determinates.

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

The decrease in propensity among the military's target audience over the last few years is one of the major challenges for recruiters. This makes advertising even more of a challenge than in previous years because a greater body of individuals no longer have a tendency to volunteer for service. From 2000 to 2008, propensity dropped from an average rate of 24 percent to 15 percent (see Figure 1).¹⁷ The 2004 National Research Council study on "Evaluating Military Advertising and Recruiting" theories of behavior and behavior change to explain an individual's propensity to enlist. According to the framework, whether or not someone enlists in the military is a direct function of the person's intention to enlist. According to the theoretical model provided in the study, intentions do not always translate into anticipated behavior. Sometimes individuals state a negative intention to join but later enlisted. Others intend to enlist but never actually join. Two distinct variables affect a person's ability to act on intentions: environmental factors and required qualifications. Despite the obvious contradictions and barriers to intentions, propensity is a good indicator of enlistment behavior.¹⁸

JAMRS is an official DoD program responsible for the joint marketing communications, market research, and studies. One of JAMRS' objective is to explore the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of America's youth as they relate to joining the military.¹⁹ In some of their most recent studies, the program describes a decreasing propensity rate across the less than 5 percent of young Americans (ages 17-24) have indicated a propensity for service.²⁰ The pursuable population has drastically contracted over the past 10-15 years. The implementations of this declining statistic may have negative effects on a service's ability to advertise effectively if the message is falling on deaf ears. However, it can also serve as an opportunity for the ARNG to understand why this percentage is dropping consistently over the past decade and use a more targeted approach to persuade a market that would not otherwise consider enlistment. There is

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

potential to expand research in this area as a factor that can be influenced by effective advertising.

The ARNG has the second largest recruiting mission of all services. It is second only to the US Army Recruiting Command. Marketing strategies differ drastically because of the unique differences between the Title 32 and Title 10 missions. Each State and Territory (S&T) is given a recruiting mission that must be met in order to achieve personnel readiness goals of that S&T and the ARNG as a whole. State recruiters are restricted to state boundaries but have the ability to administer local marketing and advertising programs to support their efforts. Since the ARNG cannot rely on a strategy with recruiters respectively spread across major population centers, maintaining a strong localized marketing effort is very essential to mission success.²¹

Localized efforts tend to reach population centers that would otherwise be missed with a national-level advertising alone. They also tend to be more tailorable and provide commanders the flexibility to communicate the differences and advantages of joining the ARNG. This local-based advertising strategy was evident in private sector marketing as recently as 2013, highlighted in a Baliho case study. It indicated 47 percent of national brands planned to spend more money on local marketing than in previous years.²² The challenge for the ARNG is developing a strategy that supports a local marketing effort with enough oversight to ensure the message is standardized and ROI is measured appropriately.

The ARNG is an organization that must earn and maintain trust from the communities they serve. Advertising that does not reflect the army values has the potential of breaking the trust of the American people and diminishing the value of the ARNG brand. This factor can ultimately play a role in negatively effecting consumer behavior within the target market and influencers. Influencers such as school counselors, coaches, and parents all play a significant

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

role in the recruiting process. As perception develops based on specific marketing efforts, their opinions help influence the behavior of the recruitable market.

The challenges today might very well be the same challenges we face for years to come. A strong marketing strategy that stands the test of time is essential as the ARNG tackles these challenges for the foreseeable future. Targeted advertising at the local level that help gain awareness from potential recruits and influences is key to the ARNG's success. As propensity decreases and strict AFQT standards are maintained, marketing plans need to be well defined and account for a wide range of factors. Furthermore, an evaluation metric such as the brand equity model offered in this paper could take into account the long and short-term effects of marketing.

Marketing Principles

The basic marketing principles that serve as a foundation for marketing strategies in corporations are also applicable to the U.S. Armed Forces. However, because of the uniqueness of the military's mission and challenges each service faces, the application of these principles are different in certain respects. There are three marketing principles common to nearly all business models and are also applicable to military marketing. This section will analyze how the ARNG can develop a comprehensive marketing strategy based on the principles of segmentation, positioning, and targeting in order to focus on tackling current challenges and building long-term equity.

The process of market segmentation involves dividing a broad target market into different subsets or groups as a way to more clearly define who is targeted.²³ Military marketing strategies appear to use three approaches to segmentation: geographic, demographic, and psychographic. Geographic segmentation involves recognizing regional differences in

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

consumer preferences. For example, what attracts the attention of potential recruits in one region of the United States might not work in others. The practice of geographic segmentation best supports the justification to maintain localized advertising. It demonstrates the differences between regions and helps marketers tailor a message that fits the interests of the target market at the local level. Demographic segmentation, as it pertains to military marketing, is best described by segmenting the market by age groups. Although the targeted age range is 17-24, military marketing is in a somewhat unique circumstance. Marketing efforts must take into account how influencers perceive the message as well. Advertising must be perceived positively by potential recruits and potential influencers. Military marketing demographics are best described by these two segments. This is an important point because it speaks directly to the complexities of military marketing. It also illustrates the importance of developing two different segments of the market: potential recruits and influencers. For example, if a marketing campaign is designed to help increase positive perception from influencers then it would not be appropriate to expect all marketing and advertising efforts to be measured by exactly how many recruits they attract.

Lastly, using psychographic segmentation effectively might give military marketers the opportunity to tackle the decreased propensity challenge. Studies have shown that psychographic segmentation has better predictive power than demographic bases.²⁴ Psychographic factors such as lifestyle, attitudes, values, and loyalty can help marketers understand consumer behavior.

Positioning can be best described as using words, symbols and ideas in order to place an organization at an advantage over its competition based on the perception of the consumer.²⁵ Military recruitment is very competitive among service components. Each component strives to obtain attraction and awareness of their service, communicate what makes their service unique or

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

advantageous, and persuade their target market to enlist. The use of words, symbols and ideas goes beyond the construction of a well-placed and designed advertisement. It can be directly related to the organization's branding strategy. Linking a clear message that is reflective of the organization's characteristics, values, and attributes is the underlining goal of the organization's marketing effort. Fundamentally speaking, branding is directly related to the marketing principle of positioning. As such, measuring the effectiveness of marketing and advertising should the value of the service component's brand into consideration.

Defining the target market is an important function for marketing because it helps the organization understand how to best connect with behavioral traits associated within the specified group. Military services focus on attracting a diverse pool of eligible men and women from ages 17 to 24. However, the ARNG hopes to distinguish itself through a unique ability to represent a force as diverse as the specific communities they represent. Developing a diverse target market is a difficult effort to measure. For the ARNG, specific gender, race, or ethnicity recruitment goals are not developed. However, advertisements attempt to demonstrate a diverse force in hopes of appealing to the same audience. This concept is not new for professional marketers, nor is it unique to military marketing. The ARNG is simply applying a basic consumer behavior school of thought as a way to strengthen the development of their target market. However, without a specific goal, it can often be difficult to accurately measure how a specific advertisement campaign directly affects the decisions made by potential recruits. Additionally, the principle of developing a primary target market extends far beyond diversity goals. A fine-tuned target market development plan can indirectly and directly influence individuals who are, for example, athletic, leaders, and academically proficient.

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

Applying the principles of segmentation, positioning, and targeting is a common approach to the development of a marketing strategy. This approach allows marketers to develop focused messages and ensures specific campaigns are structured to reach specific audiences. Potential recruits and influencers are equally important segments of the market. Developing a diverse recruitment pool within these segments can be extremely limited if the evaluation method is measured only by the specific number of contracts signed. Instead, a comprehensive evaluation method such as a proposed brand equity model should be used because it accounts for the effects of basic marketing principles as well as the other important factors to be discussed in the following sections of this paper.

Marketing Analytics

This section will analyze how return on investment for most programs within the ARNG are measured. Generally speaking, ARNG marketing programs are measured by three main outcomes (ROI): leads, engagements, and impressions.²⁶ As mentioned in the Trends in Research section, GOA published an in-depth report on military recruiting and the recommendation was that the DoD needed to establish objectives and measures to better evaluate advertising's effectiveness.²⁷ In recent years, services are expected to account for detailed ROI as a way to justify spending. The expectation that accomplishing a recruiting mission as the sole measurement of success is no longer acceptable. An inference that military marketers have applied such a philosophy is misleading. However, measuring the effectiveness of the ARNG's marketing and advertising efforts has been a continuous struggle.

Leads and engagement generation are some of the primary goals for nearly half of the ARNG's marketing programs, but can sometimes be misleading if it is not critically analyzed. The use of raw data alone, without consideration of other factors, presents certain risks. When

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

evaluating the effectiveness of all marketing programs in terms of the number of contracts generated, important aspects such as the recruiting-recruit cycle and recruiter effort are overlooked. Not all initial contacts (leads and/or engagements) become an immediate contract for many reasons. Despite these challenges, leads and engagement data still have great value for the recruiter because it gives the greatest potential for recruiters to make an actual connection with someone who has expressed an explicit interest in enlisting. Recruiter effort is a key component of this equation. The use of a brand equity model will present a more comprehensive picture from a strategic approach by using factors that take recruiter effort into consideration.

Impression data is a valuable source of measurement that can help an organization understand the reach of a particular advertisement or campaign. Although this value might not give specified data in terms of number of recruits it actually attracts, it still serves an important role in a marketing strategy. Impressions and reach data are vital when determining where and when ads should be placed in media such as TV and radio. Such measurement gives marketers an opportunity to evaluate the ROI of a specific effort as compared to others with similar goals. In general, the DoD dedicates a large portion of their budget to this method of advertising but can show very little return specifically in terms a definitive number of recruits it generates. The value generated from programs that rely on impression based data is not assessed in terms of the number of contracts it specifically generates. The fundamental goal for these types of programs is brand awareness. Brand equity is the best measurement of ROI because it can potentially account for this fundamental goal.

Lack of number of recruits generated does not indicate ineffectiveness in marketing but rather highlights the complexity associated with youth behavior decision stages. The 2003 RAND study suggests that advertising might affect attitude and behavior at various stages of a

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

youth's early-career decision making. There are periods of gaps in the decision-making cycle depending on what stage the potential recruit is in.²⁸ Theoretically speaking, a potential applicant who has not yet made a decision to enlist can be exposed to multiple forms of marketing during this cycle, which makes it more challenging to determine the exact advertisement (if any) that led to a final decision.

As a method to evaluate the effectiveness of each individual advertising program, the ARNG must continue to apply data such as lead generation, engagements, and impressions. This data should continue to serve as the baseline to evaluate, compare, and analyze programs. However, it is important to understand that the data gained must be viewed with some level of criticism. The obvious goal is to gain quantifiable results in terms of raw data, but these results are not necessary comparatively equal. Common challenges with marketing analytics and consumer behavior theories can help provide an explanation. Establishing a link between these two major areas will help argue against the single, narrowly focus metric and it will also help justify a more comprehensive approach to measuring effectiveness such as the use of a brand equity method. Furthermore, Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between measuring individual program ROI and the four components of brand equity. This causal relationship serves as the foundation of the proposed brand equity model.

Consumer Behavior

In order to better understand consumer behavior and military recruitment, this section will include a brief description of one of the oldest marketing concepts called the Rule of Seven, as well as examine a theory on brand familiarity and consumer confidence. There are several theories in the marketing community that illustrate some of the complexities involved with consumer behavior. These theories can help further explain why it is not appropriate to expect

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

the success of a single advertising program to be measured by the exact number of enlistments gained.

Consumer behavior involves the psychological process that consumers, or potential recruits, go through in making purchase decisions, interpreting information, making plans, and implementing these plans. Understanding consumer behavior is a two-step process. First, the problem at hand must be framed as a specific decision. Second, professional marketers must understand what processes consumers go through before making a decision.²⁹ Potential recruits are faced with numerous sources of influence throughout this process and it is the goal of professional marketers to make their brand most appealing and increase influence. Being able to recognize the steps that consumers take and what motivates them to make a decision are critical functions to the success of the military recruiter and marketing professional.

A 2004 Australian study, also supported by other research, demonstrated a strong relationship between consumer confidence and brand familiarity as direct predictors of purchase intention.³⁰ This research was conducted as a commercial market-driven study but might indicate how beliefs and attitudes expressed towards specific brands are critical factors with regards to a military recruitment consumer behavior. The theory can be applied to military marketing specifically and help justify the need to incorporate a metric that can account for variances in confidence. In order to increase intention toward the ARNG brand, the organization must seek opportunities to enhance confidence in the brand. Increasing confidence and brand familiarity is one of the fundamental goals of the military marketing strategy.

The Rule of Seven concept describes how a prospective buyer (potential recruit) must hear or see a marketing message at least seven times before she/he makes a decision to join. This is an important theory because it helps to explain the need to advertise across multiple

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

media platforms and adhere to the basic marketing principles as previously described. There are two major studies (in 1965 and 1972) that suggest the number is 3 or 5.³¹ Regardless of the number, an integrated marketing communication strategy must incorporate multiple touchpoints in order to be successful. If military marketers adhere to this proven consumer behavior concept, then the successful recruitment of an individual cannot theoretically be linked to a specific advertisement but rather linked to the effects of multiple marketing efforts. It is inappropriate to expect services to link a specific contract to a specific advertisement. This concept further supports the need for a metric that measures the overall success from a more comprehensive perspective, such as a brand equity model.

Understanding consumer behavior is a critical function of military recruitment and marketing. If the ARNG does not apply the same theories adopted by many accomplished private sector businesses, long-term brand equity is potentially at risk. Measuring the success of a single program by a single narrowly focused metric ignores the important Rule of Seven concept and the consumer psychological process. The ARNG must strive to promote awareness, confidence, and familiarity as means to generate long-term equity and apply a metric that accounts for these components.

Recommendation: Brand Equity Model

Applying a brand equity model can serve as a useful tool to measure the effectiveness of military marketing and advertising. This section will analyze three key areas to support this recommendation: definitions to key terms associated with brand equity, how the private sector measures brand equity, and an analysis of the theoretical application to military marketing and advertising.

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

At the most basic definition, a brand is simply the name given to a product or service. When used in this sense, brand is similar to the current meaning of the word *trademark*. Over time, professional marketers have used this term to describe the intangible attributes of a product or service. When consumers think of a specific brand, familiar names can immediately trigger a connection with the consumer and product or service provided. The term branding involves the process of creating a unique image and message through marketing and advertising campaigns. By creating a unique brand and delivering it across a wide range of media platforms, brand awareness is developed along with perceived quality, brand association, and brand loyalty.³² Theoretically, this will eventually lead to increased sales and gained market share. The development and measurement of brand equity has received an increased share of strategic marketing management attention in the past several years.

Measuring brand equity is typically approached in two ways: behavioral and financial. Both can help measure an organization's overall performance across a wide spectrum of factors. A financial brand equity approach uses factors such as market share, profitability, and growth rate to measure the success of their brand. Behavioral approaches measure strength using data such as retention, customer loyalty, and perception.³³ This approach can also help illustrate some of the more intangible values that branding can bring to a company such as a consumer's emotional connection. Marketers can use specific and relevant factors in order to effectively illustrate the value of their brand through the application of a single or combination of these three equity metrics.

In terms of military recruitment and personnel strength management at the strategic level, a hybrid of the two approaches should be applied in order to best capture the effects of all marketing efforts. Using a variety of factors that are represented in each approach is important

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

because it can account for the important aspects to strength maintenance and military recruitment challenges. Additionally, using readily available data that is reported within the recruiting community regularly will help make this brand equity model a relevant and practical approach. The follow six key factors drive ARNG brand equity and should be used in the application of a new metric: DoD market share, recruiting mission, retention mission, JAMRS survey data, diversity goals, and quality metrics (see Figure 2).

DoD market share is often used as the sole measure of success for an individual recruiter or team. It is a useful tool because it helps to measure how well a recruiter is performing in terms of the number of recruits gained versus the estimated potential recruiters available based on census data provided by JAMRS. Market share analysis gives a comparative insight, since it compares performance to other service components. This measurement tool might also highlight, to some degree, recruiter effort. Although this is a great analysis tool, it should not serve as a stand-alone metric because of the inherent differences between the Title 10 and Title 32 missions. Active components have the ability to load recruiters in dense markets and can therefore increase market share comparatively. However, the Army National Guard is represented across all states and multiple regions within each. Theoretically, this off-set will help balance a national market share analysis. The DoD market share analysis should serve as one of the six key factors in the brand equity model.

Recruiting and retention missions are often the single motivating factor to military marketing, making it an important factor in the brand equity model. ARNG recruiting and retention goals are based on numerous factors and applied models. Quarterly mission adjustments are made in order to help manage the congressional fiscal year end-strength ceiling. Ideally and generally speaking, if the goals for each recruiting command are met, end-strength

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

goals will follow. In the private sector, in-depth analyses are applied to the acquisition and retention of customers. In the private-sector, efforts such as promotional advertising can be applied to help increase sales through the acquisition of new customers and/or attraction of return customers. Incentives to reenlist can be applied by similar methods of promotional advertising in order to generate awareness and attraction. The same basic concepts of developing a strategy to tackle the balance of retention and acquisition in the private market, can also be applied to military recruiting.

JAMRS conducts regular surveys with men and woman ages 16-24 as DoD market research in order to give service components a greater understanding of their target market. This is a valuable source of information for services and can assistance military marketers in developing direction to their marketing strategy. The results from polls and surveys can serve as an additional factor to be applied towards the brand equity model. The focus should be on questions from surveys that focus on areas such as perception and advertisement recall. This qualitative analysis can potentially serve as a tool to determine how well connected our target market is to the ARNG brand and adjustments required to help strengthen that connection. Using this method of evaluation will give the ARNG insight on brand equity from a behavioral approach perspective.

As previously stated, the ARNG does not have a set mission number with regards to diversity goals. However, it is assumed that the ARNG will continue to desire a force that is representative of the community it serves. The marketing strategy will continue to play center-stage to that goal. Positioning the brand through targeted advertisements within communities that portray a representative image is a key element to the success of a diversity strategy. An

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

evaluation method that accounts for the efforts involved with recruiting a diverse force should be included as part of the new brand equity model.

Lastly, meeting quality objectives is one of the more challenging factors to military recruiting. A marketing strategy must focus in areas of the market that can alleviate this challenge and having a metric that accounts for this effort is equally important. The ARNG must continue to focus on media that has a historical track record of producing high quality contracts. The 2003 RAND study reported that 70 percent of leads generated by print and direct mail were high quality. Leads generated from television were only 55 percent high quality. This data suggests that certain media may be more effective at reaching specific targets. Furthermore, the study also argues that advertising must reach a minimum critical level before it has any impact on enlistment. Beyond this critical minimum level, increases in advertising increase highly qualified enlistments.³⁴ It's imperative that the brand equity model accounts for this critical factor to military recruiting.

Marketing is not a stand-alone effort. The success of a marketing strategy relies on multiple efforts that include recruiter performance, advertising, public relation efforts, and the emotional connection that the organization has with the target market. As marketers implement programs, the direct results are measured in terms of impressions, engagements, and leads (program ROI). In the proposed brand equity model (Figure 2), the four equity components (awareness, perception, loyalty, and association) are considered the second order effects of each program's ROI. The six factors outlined are the measurable results of each component.³⁵ The six brand equity factors outlined in the proposed model have the potential to account for all aspects related to military marketing because it links each program's ROI to respective

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

secondary results. The six factors should be considered the measurable effects of all marketing efforts and correlates directly with the brand equity component.

Conclusion

With the complexities of maintaining a national marketing strategy, providing oversight on local activities, and the challenges faced in today's recruiting environment, the ARNG must adopt a philosophy of marketing that is complimented by the techniques used to deliver its message. All recruiting and retention efforts should be considered a task within the organization's marketing strategy. Recruiters are the face of the organization and serve as a direct reflection of the brand image. It is important that their values and morals are reflective of the organization that they represent and consistent with the image advertised. The balance between the two levels of marketing is critical to the success of the marketing strategy because they are complimenting efforts. As such, it is imperative that the ARNG apply a metric that takes this effort into account.

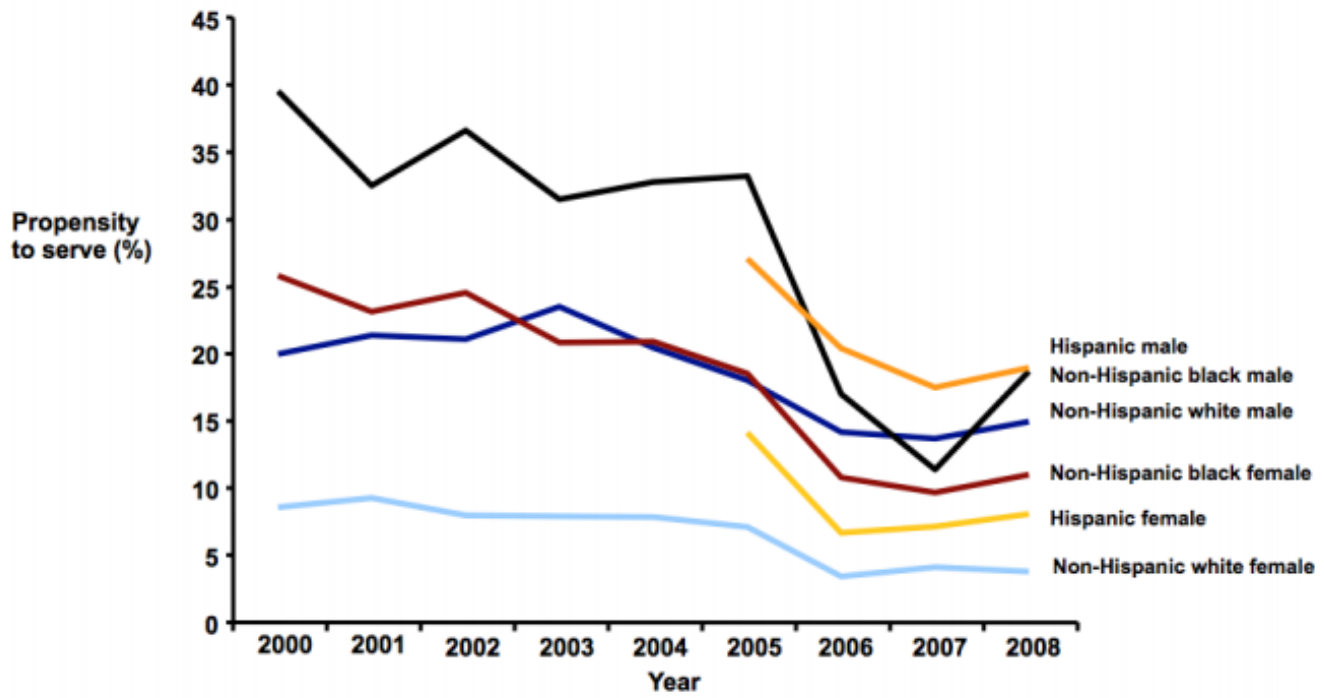
Specific programs such as marketing events, advertising campaigns, and public relations activities should not be evaluated in a vacuum. Evaluating the success of a specific program needs to be critically managed. Goals must be established prior to implementation, tracked throughout the life cycle of the program, and evaluated based on how it meets strategic objectives. The proposed brand equity model will help the ARNG account for the important aspects related to meeting current and anticipated challenges, the application of basic marketing principles, and use of proven consumer behavior models. Measuring the effectiveness of military marketing and advertising is a complex task and the application of a narrowly focused metric such as the one previously proposed will not properly accomplish this task. The ARNG must develop a marketing strategy that allows for the use of the new brand equity model. The

Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

implementation of such a model will help provide a broader understanding and allow the organization to manage their marketing efforts strategically.

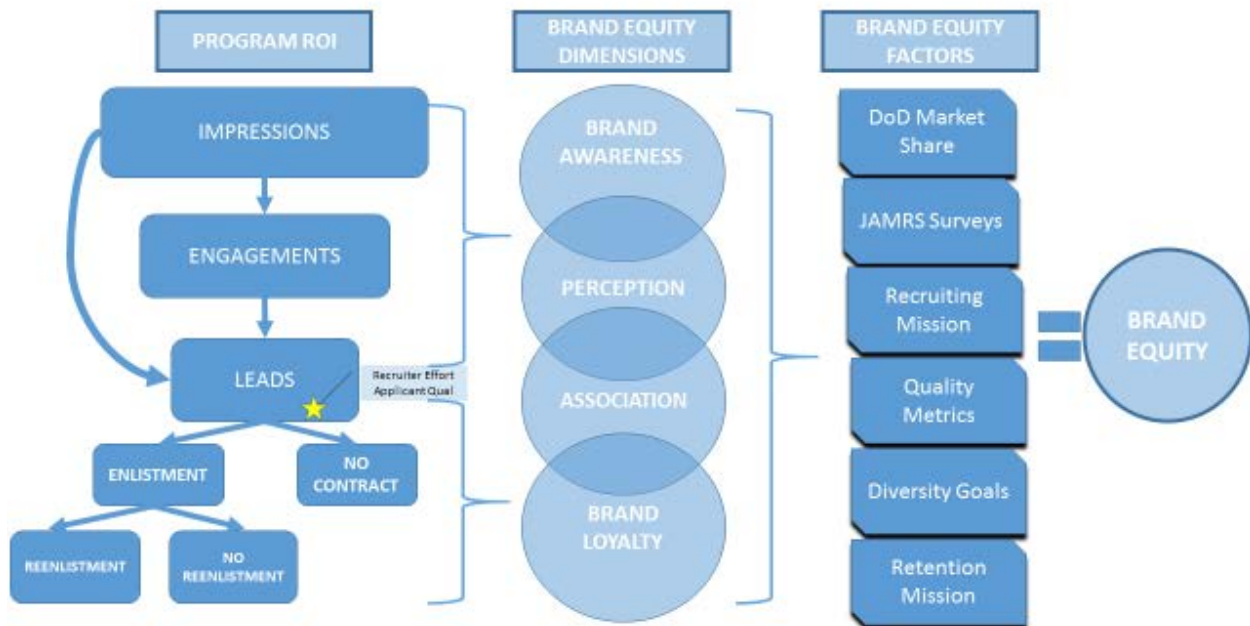
Figures

Figure 1: Propensity to serve from 2000 – 2008.¹⁶



Measuring Effectiveness of Military Marketing and Advertising

Figure 2: The ARNG Brand Equity Model: The purpose of this model is to illustrate how individual program ROI contributes to brand equity. The position of the brand equity components and factors in this model is deliberate.



Notes

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