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A diffusion of innovations approach to investigate the brand name change of a higher education institution

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A DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS APPROACH
TO INVESTIGATE THE
BRAND NAME CHANGE
OF A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Mass Communication

in

The Manship School of Mass Communication

by
Jacqueline Eiswirth Tisdell
B.A., Centenary College, 2000
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DEDICATION

This master's thesis is dedicated to my husband and best friend, Eric, and my parents, John and JoAnn Eiswirth. You always believed in me and pushed me to do my best. I could not have done this without your loving support every step of the way.

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ABSTRACT

Understanding the communication concepts behind promoting a brand name is essential to the successful adoption of that innovation. This research links diffusion of innovations theory, branding, and public relations by exploring the name change of a higher education institution. Extensive work has been done in the areas of branding and diffusion of innovations theory. However, this study links the two.

The adoption of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette new name by its alumni was studied by analyzing the public relations campaign post-name change and by gathering background information on previous diffusion of innovations research and the importance of brand names to products, specifically higher education institutions. This background information set up a framework for testing diffusion of innovations theory with a marketing innovation. A survey was administered to a random sample of UL Lafayette out-of-state alumni to determine their opinions of the new university name, the rate of adoption of the new name, and the modes of communication utilized in the diffusion process.

The approval rating of the new name by out-of-state alumni was split, with almost half of the respondents using the new name in everyday speech and a little more than half using it in everyday writing. In addition, while the public relations campaign did reach some out-of-state alumni, most learned of the new name through word-of-mouth and most were influenced to use the new name by other persons rather than by the university or university publications. The researcher also learned that the out-of-state alumni that approved and adopted the new name are also valuable supporters of the university through recruitment and funding. However, those who did not approve and adopt the new name now feel disconnected from their alma mater and do not choose to support it.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On August 27, 1999, the University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL) officially changed its name to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL Lafayette). To some people, the university brand name change may have been a surprise, but in reality, it was the result of an ongoing campaign lasting over 16 years.¹

In April 1984, the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities approved the name change from the University of Southwestern Louisiana to the University of Louisiana. However, the Lafayette institution only had one month to operate under the new name. In May 1984, a District Court ruling stated that only the Louisiana Legislature could approve the change of an institution's name. The university appealed, but the Appellate Court upheld the District Court ruling, and the Louisiana Supreme Court refused to hear the case.²

During the time of the court proceedings, there were several oppositions to the name change by other Louisiana institutions, including the state's flagship university, Louisiana State University (LSU).

“LSU Chancellor (James H.) Wharton said he is concerned that the new name will result in the university's expansion,” as reported in *The Advocate* on April 28, 1984. “Wharton maintained that USL is undeserving of statewide status that the name University of Louisiana suggests. ‘We're dealing with image, not with substance and quality,’ he said. ‘We have too many institutions already who want to have advanced study programs. There's not enough money to go around.’”³

After several years and a few key shifts in power positions, including the election of Governor M. J. “Mike” Foster and the appointments of Dr. William Jenkins as LSU's Chancellor and Dr. E. Joseph Savoie as Commissioner of Higher Education, the University of Southwestern

Louisiana was able to make some key allies in the push for a new name. The persistence paid off. On April 27, 1995, Act 45 passed the Louisiana Legislature, changing the name of the managing board over eight Louisiana four-year institutions, which includes USL, from the Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities to the University of Louisiana System. In addition, it allowed the board's eight institutions to change their names to the University of Louisiana at their respective geographical locations. Dr. Savoie, who was UL Lafayette's alumni director prior to becoming Louisiana's Commissioner for Higher Education, spoke of his experiences leading up to the adoption of the legislation,

This bill passed [ACT 45] in '95, which was kind of a compromise bill. During this time we really built some relationships with LSU...We started working together, and we found out not necessarily on this issue, but we found out on other issues that if we worked together, we would have more success...So this became a less civil point of contention and eventually we worked up a deal with legislation where LSU's concerns with not losing its flagship position were met.⁴

While the university was successful in gaining legislative permission to change its name, the bill included a critical stipulation. At least two universities had to change their names at the same time. Therefore, USL had to wait for an ally institution.⁵

After a formidable four-year campaign with its own alumni and supporters, Northeast Louisiana University (NLU) agreed to join with USL in the name change. On August 27, 1999, USL and NLU became the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and the University of Louisiana at Monroe, respectively.⁶

UL Lafayette President Ray Authement outlined some of the reasons for the new name in an August 27, 1999, press release. Those reasons included "recruit top-notch faculty and

students; compete for the nation's top scientists and most prestigious grants; and attract more Division I athletic teams to compete with the Ragin' Cajuns."⁷ Dr. Savoie mirrored those reasons and recalled the issues the previous name raised with alumni. "I remember getting letters from alumni who felt as if the double-directional name denoted a small regional institution and that they were out competing against people who had degrees from more prestigious institutions...that they were at a disadvantage," said Savoie.⁸

Tonya Lynnette Newman did extensive research into the pre-name change of UL Lafayette for her 1998 master's thesis at LSU. Newman focused largely on the trial and legislative battle over the name change in the 1980s. Her research included rich information from interviews with key officials such as William Arceneaux, former commissioner of higher education; Dr. Ray Authement, UL Lafayette president; Kathleen Blanco, Lieutenant Governor and former Lafayette Representative; and former LSU chancellors William Davis and James Wharton.⁹ This body of work greatly elaborated on the history behind UL Lafayette's name change, but in her analyses Newman stated, "it has been three years since the Louisiana Legislature granted USL the right to change its name. Yet, USL is still USL. And things do not look to be changing anytime soon."¹⁰ Little did she know that USL would become the University of Louisiana at Lafayette almost 16 months later.

1.1 Public Relations Campaign

One purpose of this study was to explore the public relations campaign post university name change and discover whether the diffusion of this brand name had any effect on alumni. In order to explore UL Lafayette's public relations campaign, this researcher followed Jerry A. Hendrix's ROPE model of public relations case study analysis.¹¹ Information and materials from

the university's public relations campaign came from a June 19, 2002, interview with Julie Simon-Dronet, UL Lafayette's Director of Public Relations and News Services.

The ROPE model provides an easy and complete way to break down and study public relations campaigns. It consists of four phases. The first is research, which explores the client, the problem or issue to be solved, and the audience(s). The second phase is objectives, which is a grouping of the desired outcomes of the public relations campaign. Next is programming, which explores the action of the campaign used to achieve the objectives. The final phase is evaluation, which is the process of measuring the effectiveness of the campaign.¹²

UL Lafayette is the public relations campaign client. The university changed its name from the University of Southwestern Louisiana (USL) and wanted to introduce and promote the positive attributes of its new name to all its constituents. One of the strengths of this campaign was the length of the pre-name change campaign that lasted almost two decades. Because of its unusual length, many key constituents had prior knowledge of the new name and were already supportive. Another strength was the timing. The university was celebrating its centennial anniversary at virtually the same time as the name change. Public relations officials already had invitations going out to all university constituents, as well as promotional materials in place for the anniversary. The timing enabled the announcement of both major events at the same time with minimal costs. However, timing was also a weakness in this campaign. Because of the centennial anniversary, most public relations and university efforts were invested in that promotion, thus taking time and effort away from promoting the new name. Another weakness of this campaign was the wide targeted audience. The name change was important to all constituents of the university, but targeting such a wide audience increased the difficulty of reaching each constituent group in the most effective manner.¹³

A proactive, short-term campaign was launched to achieve objectives, which were to introduce the new university name, promote positive attitudes about the new name, and influence the use of the new name. The target of this campaign was all key university constituents.

Programming instruments utilized were mostly print materials, including both controlled and uncontrolled media. Controlled media consisted of a memorandum sent to all university faculty and staff, an article in the university magazine, *La Louisiane*, and an announcement of the new name and invitation to the centennial anniversary celebration sent to all university constituents. Uncontrolled media included a press release sent to all media outlets, an announcement of the new name sent to sports constituents through the sports information office, and a letter to the editor of the *Lafayette Daily Advertiser* from UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray Authement.¹⁴

No formal evaluation measures of this campaign were established.¹⁵ However, Simon-Dronet said, “If I were forced to give an acceptance rating I would say it would be in the low to mid nineties, (locally).”¹⁶ Unfortunately, this would only be a guess because of the lack of evaluation measures. This is a common oversight in everyday public relations generally because of the time constraints and understaffing that are typical in this field.

A theoretical base for everyday practice is another helpful public relations tool commonly overlooked. For example, in their article, *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*, James E. Grunig, a leading researcher in public relations, and Fred Repper wrote, “...the Diffusion of Innovations, is familiar to most public relations practitioners, although few apparently use the concept in research.”¹⁷ The diffusion of innovations theory is just one of many theoretical concepts that could further the success of public relations practices if utilized. In fact, there are several aspects of the diffusion of innovations theory that may have improved

UL Lafayette's public relations campaign, including the use of opinion leaders during the adoption phase.

1.2 End Notes

¹ Thames, K. (1999). At Long Last Perseverance Yields a New Name: the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. La Louisiane, 17.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., qtd.

⁴ Savoie, E. Interview by author. 27 September 2002. Tape recording. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁵ Thames, K., 18-20.

⁶ Ibid., 17-18.

⁷ Payton, C. (1999, August 27). Today. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette. News Release. University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

⁸ Savoie, E.

⁹ Newman, Tonya Lynnette. What's In a Name? The Trial and Travail of the University of Southwestern Louisiana's Effort to Change Its Name to the University of Louisiana. A Thesis. LSU. 1998. 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 97.

¹¹ Hendrix, J. (2001). Public Relations Cases. Fifth Edition. Stamford: Wadsworth Thompson Learning. vi.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Simon-Dronet, J. Interview by author. 19 June 2002. Tape recording. Lafayette, Louisiana.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Simon-Dronet, J.

¹⁷ Grunig, J. & Repper, F. (1992) Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 141.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

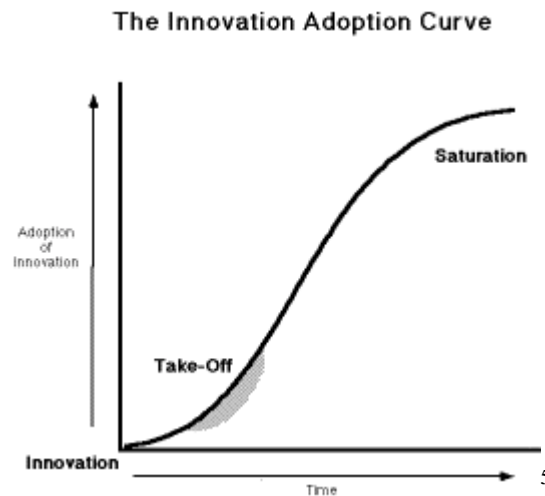
2.1 Diffusion of Innovations

An innovation is something new, an idea or object, which is presented to a person or group for adoption. According to Everett M. Rogers, “Diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system.”¹ The diffusion of innovations theory explores the communication aspects behind how an innovation is adopted.

There are several distinct aspects about innovation diffusion research, including lack of prior knowledge about the innovation and the importance of attitude change and decision-making. Because an innovation is a new concept to the targeted audience, there is a “high degree of uncertainty in seeking information about, and deciding to adopt and implement, an innovation.”² This is where interpersonal communications come into play.

Several steps lead to the adoption of an innovation. Frank Bass’s 1969 model identified mass media and word-of-mouth as the two main influential components of innovation adoption.³ Mass media play a large role in the initial awareness stage of diffusion. However, interpersonal communication often takes place during the decision-making process. “A person evaluates a new idea and decides whether or not to adopt it on the basis of discussions with peers who have already adopted or rejected the innovation.”⁴ The heavy dependence on peers presents the importance of opinion leaders in the innovation diffusion process. Opinion leaders carry more weight with decision-makers because of an already established relationship. Furthermore, mass media may be used as a tool to reach the general public, while more direct and personal communications may be used to reach opinion leaders, who in turn influence the decision-makers.

Diffusion is measured by the rate of adoption over time. This measurement is typically characterized by an S-curve graph (see below).



This is because only a few innovators are willing to adopt the innovation early on. However, as these innovators begin to communicate about the innovation to their peers, it leads to a heavy rate of adoption. After this accelerated growth, diffusion tapers off to include only a small amount of late adopters.⁶

Bryce Ryan and Neal C. Gross are the pioneers of the diffusion of innovations theory. Their 1943 study of hybrid seed corn diffusion among Iowa farmers established a foundation upon which most diffusion research today is based.⁷ The two researchers wanted to know why it took 12 years for the widespread diffusion of an innovation that was overwhelmingly beneficial. They gathered survey information through personal interviews with the farmers. “The farmer-respondents were asked about the sources and channels from which they first learned about hybrid corn (commercial seed dealers and salespeople were mentioned as most important) versus the sources and channels that convinced them to adopt (other farmers like neighbors and friends were reported as most important).”⁸ Their research touched upon the importance of social networks and interpersonal communication but did not fully investigate this aspect of diffusion.⁹

James S. Coleman, Elihu Katz, and Herbert Menzel's research expanded on the innovation diffusion theory begun by Bryce Ryan and Neal C. Gross. Coleman, Katz, and Menzel's 1966 diffusion of tetracycline study focused on the use of social networks that led to the adoption of the new drug among physicians. They found that "the most innovative medical doctors [the early adopters] were cosmopolite, making numerous out-of-town trips to medical specialty meetings."¹⁰ Furthermore, "doctors who were linked in more interpersonal networks adopted the innovation more rapidly than did more isolated doctors."¹¹ These social networks established the opinion leaders for this medical field.

The use of opinion leaders in the innovation diffusion process is believed to expedite the process in addition to being more cost-effective. "Marketers have long thought that the identification of leaders would enable them to target small groups of consumers efficiently, thereby leaving the consequent ripple of adoptions throughout the network to the word-of-mouth process."¹² The inexpensiveness of this approach may also be the result of the lack of need to reach opinion leaders through mass media campaigns.

Recent diffusion of innovations research has focused on technological advances. One such study was Joe F. Alexander, Denny E. McCorkle and James Reardon's review (2001) about using the innovation diffusion approach to integrate new technologies into business and marketing programs. Their investment and use of opinion leaders in the guise of "technology champions"¹³ show that the use of opinion leaders is important to the success of diffusing technological advances among higher education faculty. "Rather than introducing discipline-specific technologies in a haphazard and inefficient manner, a viable solution requires that such technological support first be provided to departmental faculty innovators, who in turn are required to actively participate in the diffusion of new technologies to other faculty."¹⁴ They

identify these innovators as “technology champions” and focus their time, instruction and resources on those innovators who in turn diffuse the knowledge.¹⁵

Further diffusion of technological innovation research came from Donald R. Lehmann, Arthur B. Markman and C. Page Moreau. Their 2001 study explored “the psychological processes underlying the individual consumer’s adoption decision.”¹⁶ Their research yielded a wealth of information and correlation between prior product knowledge and attitudes towards and adoption of innovations. For example, consumers with low camera knowledge and high computer knowledge were the most likely to purchase a digital camera, whereas those with high camera knowledge and low computer knowledge were the least likely to adopt/purchase the digital camera.¹⁷ Their findings show that heavy research of the targeted audiences’ prior knowledge in the innovation area can help marketers segment the audience in order for a more cost-effective and positive campaign.

Further research on the relationship between perception of an innovation and actual adoption is addressed in Mike W. Chiasson and Chris Y. Lovato’s 2001 study. In the literature review, they acknowledged Rogers’ 1995 work on perceived characteristics of an innovation (PCIs) which were: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability and observability.¹⁸ They explained the concepts in full:

Relative advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes. It is often expressed as economic profitability, social prestige, or other specified benefits, thus highlighting its basis in both individual and social networks. Compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and perceived goals of the user. Complexity is the degree to which an innovation

is perceived as being difficult to understand and use. Trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with, on a limited basis. Observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others.¹⁹

When looking at brand name change, relative advantage has the highest application value out of the five PCIs because the innovation directly replaces a previous idea/name. This concept is key to the successful adoption of the new university name because those who believe the new name to be better than the previous name may also be more likely to adopt the innovation.

Much of the recent work published in the field of the diffusion of innovations theory is technological in nature. By studying previous research approaches and applying them to a brand name change, this researcher intended to break away from technological innovations and explore the theory using an important public relations/marketing concept. While the mode for studying innovation diffusion was similar to the technological innovation research, the importance of this study was to see if and/or how the results of a public relations based study differed.

2.2 Brand Names

Since we are looking at a brand name as an innovation in the diffusion of innovations theory, it is important to explore the use and functionality of a brand. In order to establish its importance, it is essential to discover the impact a brand has on a product.

“A brand is a name, symbol, design, or mark that enhances the value of a product beyond its functional purpose.”²⁰ Successful brand names can penetrate the advertising haze to get through to the consumers and influence their purchasing decisions or, in this case, university choice. According to a 2001 study, “more than half of shoppers have a favored brand.”²¹ This shows that one of the most, if not THE most, important aspect of product placement is the brand name.

When establishing the value of a brand, there are four areas to consider: 1) awareness, 2) knowledge, 3) preference, and 4) brand loyalty.²² Awareness is the most important initial aspect because it measures whether the consumer knows of the product's existence.²³ The second, knowledge, measures how much the consumer knows about the product.²⁴ Next is preference, "how many consumers...are predisposed toward your brand rather than the competition;"²⁵ and finally, brand loyalty measures whether or not the consumer will always pick your product, no matter the extra costs.²⁶

In the case of a university name change, awareness is very important because the consumer must be aware of the new brand name to be able to relate their previous knowledge about the product to the new name. Preference on the university level is important in order for a consumer to choose one university over the competition. Keeping in mind that branding is more than just a name, for university constituents to remain loyal to the university even through a name change, there must be brand loyalty. However, if the constituents' loyalty lies firmly in the previous name, that brand loyalty may be a hindrance to the adoption of the new name.

Robert Sevier's 2002 book, Building a Brand That Matters, focuses on the importance of branding in higher education. One of the messages in this book is that branding is more about establishing your product as the only solution to a problem rather than "getting your targets to choose you over your competition."²⁷ Furthermore, a good brand has these six essential qualities: delivers the message clearly, communicates quickly, projects credibility, strikes an emotional chord, motivates the respondent, and creates a strong user loyalty.²⁸ Basic branding principles that work in the marketplace for essentially all products also apply to higher education. Sevier states that empirical evidence shows institutions with successful brands also have these benefits:

- Messages that cut through the clutter of the marketplace
- An ability to charge—and have students pay—more for their products and services, thereby increasing cash flow and reducing dependence on tuition discounting
- An ability to attract and retain better faculty and administrators
- Higher retention rates
- Greater loyalty among stakeholders
- A higher level of alumni satisfaction that translates into alumni participation in alumni events, audiences, and relationship-building
- Greater success raising money²⁹

These are all favorable outcomes for colleges and universities to have. While branding in general encompasses many things, the name is one of the first and most essential elements to the equation of branding success.

UL Lafayette President Dr. Ray Authement addressed the limitations of the university's former double-directional name during a Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities meeting in 1984:

...It is impossible to convince an individual from the University of Illinois, which has a significant computer science program, to leave that institution to come to the University of Southwestern Louisiana—not because we're not an excellent institution in that area—but the individual has to look at his own academic career and has to make the judgment as to whether that's a move forward and upward. And, I submit to you that that is the major problem with the name that we have.³⁰

The university's former name lacked awareness and preference on a national level, making it harder to compete for top faculty and national monies.

Robert Sevier (2001) outlined awareness and relevance as the two essential components of an effective brand. He attributed lack of awareness to the great university programs that no one knows about. “The quality may be there, but if the marketplace is not aware of it, the quality is for naught.”³¹ In addition, if there is awareness but no relevance (the message fulfills a need of the audience) the brand loses its effectiveness.³²

Dr. E. Joseph Savoie, Louisiana’s Commissioner for Higher Education, also believed a brand name plays an essential role in higher education perception.

With the system name Board of Trustees for State Colleges and Universities, you don’t know whether it’s in Louisiana or Pennsylvania... You don’t know what that means... does it have some state impact or a community college? What is it? The fact that a system carries a name of the University of Louisiana System, that immediately creates an impression that this is a system of statewide significance, and the institutions that carry the name, I think ULM [University of Louisiana at Monroe] for people that don’t know anything about them, people probably equate it to something like University of North Carolina Charlotte or University of Texas San Antonio, and in my mind that’s different from Northeast Utah. They may not get the impression that it’s an institution of statewide significance but they might get the impression that it’s an institution that’s part of a system of schools with statewide significance and it’s not just a pregnant community college.³³

In a 2000 study, James C. Crimmins measured the value added by a brand name by “offering consumers a series of choices in which prices vary and discovering from those choices the prices at which a brand and its competitor are equally desirable.”³⁴ The median value added by the top brand name over the store brand was 40 percent, while the median value added by the

top brand over the second slot brand was 10 percent. This meant that if the top brand was priced 10 percent higher than the number two brand and 40 percent higher than the store brand, just as many consumers would choose the second slot and store brands as would the top brands.³⁵ In effect, some consumers would be willing to pay more for the top brand than other brands despite the same quality of the products.

The Kellogg Company discerned the importance of its brand name in a blind taste test. “Consumer preference for its corn flakes cereal was 47 percent. When the Kellogg name was revealed in another test, preference rose to 59 percent.”³⁶ This shows that corporate branding awareness increases preference.

Throughout the years, it has been evident that a name can make or break a product. And, with so many products currently on the market, finding a name that differentiates a product from a competitor is more difficult than ever. This also applies to institutions of higher education. Universities must sell their product, higher education, to potential students, potential faculty and staff, legislators, alumni, the community, among other constituencies. A brand name is one key aspect of the selling process.

UL Lafayette’s Director of Public Relations and News Services Julie Simon-Dronet found that the double-directional name of University of Southwestern Louisiana was misleading because “Double-directional names are much more commonly used in the United States—three times more—to identify two-year community colleges than four-year universities.”³⁷ Even though the Lafayette institution was the second largest in the state, enrolling almost 17,000 students (well over the national four-year university average), its double-directional name seemed to group the institution with community colleges that enrolled an average of 2,125 students, Dronet said.³⁸

In fact, prior to the 1999 name change, only eight out of 54 colleges and universities in the United States with double-directional names enrolled more than 10,000 students. These eight were Northeastern Illinois University (Chicago, Illinois), Northeast Louisiana University (Monroe, Louisiana), Southeastern Louisiana University (Hammond, Louisiana), University of Southwestern Louisiana (Lafayette, Louisiana), Northeastern University (Boston, Massachusetts), Southwest Missouri State University (Springfield, Missouri), Southwest Texas State University (San Marcos, Texas), and Southwestern Community College in California (see Appendix C).

UL Lafayette wanted to break from the stereotypes associated with double-directional university names. It chose a form of brand name extension, which typically extends an existing brand name onto a new product. This is an important aspect of branding. “One argument for extending existing brand names onto different products (e.g., Jeep luggage) is that the brand name carries information about the product (e.g., ruggedness). This information reduces the risk associated with the new product (brand extension) and, in turn, enhances product liking and trial.”³⁹ In fact, Crimmins’ (2000) study found that well-known brand names that extended into new categories immediately had the same or an even higher perceived value by the consumer than the current leader in that category.⁴⁰

For the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, its name plays off other well-known institutions in the country, such as the University of California, Berkeley and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. By changing its name to the “university of” (the state at its geographical location), it could give the perception of being one of the top schools, if not the top school, in the state.

Memphis State University changed its name to the University of Memphis in 1994. In a press release the university's president, V. Lane Rawlins, stated his belief that the new name would reflect the university's higher status in the education community "with a broad undergraduate and graduate curriculum, plus a growing research program."⁴¹ The new name associated the university with other established institutions such as the University of Louisville and the University of Houston, said Rawlins.⁴² Although the researcher did not find any empirical evidence to back up this claim, it is possible to associate a relation between new university names to that of established institutions with names of a similar format. It ties back again to perception.

Changing an institution's name is not a new concept. Other higher education institutions that have undergone name changes over the past couple decades include Northwood Institute in Dallas that became Northwood University, Northeast Missouri State which changed to Truman State University, Bowie State College to Bowie College of Maryland, and thirteen different schools in Georgia, which was part of an effort to model Georgia's institutional names after other states.⁴³ There has been opposition to the idea that name changes could solve deeper university problems like funding and management issues. During the rash of Georgia's new institutional names, North Georgia College's then public relations director, Marc Cutright, wrote:

Today, being a mere college is considered a low station, particularly when the title of "university" is a pen stroke away. State legislatures, enamored in these lean times, of mandating gobs of good things that don't cost a dime, are buying into and handing out wholesale promotions. Higher education budgets across the country may be getting whacked with an ax, turning professional salaries into prison guards and highway asphalt, but that's no reason to ignore our self-esteem. Poof! You're a university.⁴⁴

Cutright's sarcasm addressed a central theme: Can a name change help schools by bringing in more money, faculty, and students or is it only superficial? Robert A. Sevier advocates the importance of an effective brand, but he also concedes that marketing must be done strategically to address important issues that advertising alone cannot fix.⁴⁵

Was UL Lafayette's name change successfully accepted? Was it perceived as beneficial to the university by one of its key constituent groups? These questions and more are addressed in this study, which links an important marketing concept, branding, to diffusion of innovations research.

2.3 Research Questions

RQ1. What role did mass media play in the awareness stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette's new name?

In previous innovation diffusion research, mass media was utilized in the awareness phase of innovation diffusion. This question tests the pattern of previous research. For this study's purposes, mass distribution of products from UL Lafayette's public relations department is considered mass media, along with traditional print and broadcast media. These products include but are not limited to announcements, press releases, in-house published magazine articles, and mediated information. By looking at these aspects of the UL Lafayette public relations campaign, it measures its impact on the diffusion of the new university name to out-of-state alumni.

RQ2. What role did interpersonal communication play in the adoption stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette's new name?

In previous innovation diffusion research, interpersonal communication was utilized in the adoption phase. This question tests the pattern of previous research. It is important because

the innovation of this research study is neither scientific nor technological in nature as are the innovations in previous research studies.

RQ3. Were opinion leaders involved in the diffusion of this innovation?

Even though UL Lafayette's public relations campaign did not utilize opinion leaders in the diffusion of the new name among out-of-state alumni, possible opinion leaders may still have emerged. These opinion leaders may include fellow alumni or class presidents who are in charge of maintaining contact with their alumni classes. It is important to see whether the use of opinion leaders is a natural, consistent tool of the innovation diffusion process.

RQ4. Did the innovation add or take away alumni brand loyalty to the university?

This research question explores the relationship between an innovation and brand loyalty. One of the most, if not THE most, important aspect of product placement is the brand name. Higher education is a product and a university name is its brand. Keeping consumer loyalty of a product even after changing its brand name is essential to maintaining existing support. This question looks at whether the university was successful in maintaining an already loyal base of customers after changing the brand name of its product.

RQ5. Was there a positive relationship between relative advantage and adoption of the new name?

Relative advantage is a perceived characteristic of an innovation (PCI) where the subject believes the innovation is better than the previous idea or, in this case, name. If the subject believes the innovation has relative advantage, then he or she may be more likely to adopt the innovation.

RQ6. Did the diffusion of the university name garner the same "S-curve" graph rate of adoption as previous diffusion of innovation research?

This is an important question. It tests whether measuring a marketing concept, such as brand name, yields different reactions and/or results as a technological innovation. The major difference between this innovation and technological ones is that adoption may be a more vague concept.

2.4 End Notes

¹ Rogers, E. & Singhal, A. (1996) Diffusion of Innovations. In M. Salwen & D. Stacks (Eds.), An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research. (Ch. 26, 409). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

² Ibid., 410.

³ Bass, F., Mahajan, V., & Muller, E. (1990). New Product Diffusion Models in Marketing: A Review And Dir. Journal of Marketing, 1.

⁴ Rogers & Singhal., 410.

⁵ Tulane University. (2001) Meta Analysis Review Projects.
<http://www.payson.tulane.edu/research/images/diffusion.gif>

⁶ Rogers & Singhal., 412, 418.

⁷ Ibid., 411.

⁸ Ibid., 414-415.

⁹ Ibid., 415.

¹⁰ Ibid., 417.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Iacobucci, D. (1996). Network Models of Diffusion of Innovations. Journal of Marketing, 134.

¹³ Alexander, J., McCorkle, D., & Reardon, J. (2001). Integrating business technology and marketing education: Enhancing the diffusion process through technology champions. Journal of Marketing Education, 16.

¹⁴ Ibid., 23.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

¹⁶ Lehmann, D., Markman, A., & Moreau, C. (2001). Entrenched knowledge structures and consumer response to new products. Journal of Marketing Research, 14.

¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹⁸ Chiasson, M. & Lovato, C. (2001). Factors influencing the formation of a user's perceptions and use of a DSS software innovation. Database for Advances in Information Systems, 18.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Crimmins, J. (2000). Better measurement and management of brand value. Journal of Advertising Research, 136.

²¹ Howell, D. (2001). Label-conscious consumers reveal less-discriminating side. Dsn Retailing Today, 24.

²² Trombetta, W. (2001) Leap of faith branding and ROI. Pharmaceutical Executive, 8.

²³ Ibid., 9.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Sevier, R. (2002) Building a Brand That Matters. (Ch. 2, 10) Hiawatha: Strategy Publishing.

²⁸ Ibid., 15.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

³⁰ Newman, T. (1998) What's In a Name? The Trial and Travail of the University of Southwestern Louisiana's Effort to Change Its Name to the University of Louisiana. A Thesis. LSU, 24 (qtd).

³¹ Sevier, R. (2001) Thinking Outside the Box. (Ch. 51, 114) Hiawatha: Strategy Publishing.

³² Ibid.

³³ Savoie, E. Interview by author. 27 September 2002. Tape recording. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

³⁴ Crimmins., 141.

³⁵ Ibid., 141-142.

³⁶ Trombetta., 12.

³⁷ Thames, K. (1999) At Long Last Perseverance Yields a New Name: the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. La Louisiane, 17 (qtd).

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

³⁹ Klink, R. (2001). Creating meaningful new brand names: A study of semantics and sound symbolism. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 29.

⁴⁰ Crimmins., 142.

⁴¹ News Release. (1994, February 14). Memphis. 2.

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Newman., 13-16.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 17 (qtd).

⁴⁵ Sevier, R., 104, 113.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

For this research a cross-sectional survey design was used in the form of a self-administered online questionnaire. This allowed for easy data collection and a quick turnover.

The subjects of this research, out-of-state alumni of UL Lafayette, were chosen for two main reasons: (1) alumni are a great financial asset to most universities and therefore, an important constituent; and (2) because of their location, out-of-state alumni were less likely to have prior knowledge of this innovation.¹ This lack of prior knowledge is an important aspect of diffusion of innovations research. Because of the extended length of UL Lafayette's campaign for a new name, it increased the amount of people who had prior knowledge of the possibility of the name change prior to the actual event, thus making it important to look at out-of-state alumni where media publicity was not as frequent. In addition, Dr. E. Joseph Savoie, Louisiana's Commissioner of Higher Education, identified this group as being a benefactor of the new name, "I know that the out-of-state alumni in particular were very interested in this, it was kind of an interesting phenomenon. I never experienced it personally, but I do know that some testimonials and anecdotes from alumni said it really made a difference in their own markets."²

There are currently 75,257 total alumni listed in UL Lafayette's database.³ Of those, 19,228 live out of the state of Louisiana.⁴ Out-of-state alumni live in 50 different states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and Armed Services (see Appendix D). The states with the highest number of alumni residents are Texas with 37.9%, California with 7.2%, Florida with 6.7%, and Georgia with 5.1%. There are slightly more female alumni (50.4%) than male alumni (49.6%).⁵

After the researcher obtained permission from UL Lafayette's alumni director, Sharee Broussard, a simple random 10 percent sample of the total number of UL Lafayette out-of-state

alumni, approximately 1,923, was pulled from UL Lafayette's alumni database using R&R Report Writer.⁶ "Random sampling guarantees that each unit in a population has an equal probability of being selected in the sample."⁷ Address labels from the random sample were then mailed to the researcher for use in the letter mail-out. Permission was not granted to use out-of-state alumni email addresses.⁸ The researcher used all 1,923 address labels to mail letters on September 16, 2002, explaining the research and directing out-of-state alumni to a web site where the survey was posted. The researcher received 73 letters sent back because of incorrect addresses, thus making the total sample 1,850 persons. Survey responses were collected from September 17, 2002, through October 31, 2002. In total, 184 persons responded to the online survey, 10 percent of the sample.

Most survey questions were close-ended with the exception of listing a reason if the respondent chose "other" and the question, "Why do you believe the new name has a positive or negative effect on you?" The open-ended question and the ability to comment on the "other" selections provided the researcher with qualitative data to discuss. The first six questions of the survey provided demographic data including gender, date of birth, education level, employment status, and date of graduation from UL Lafayette.

Use of an online survey was to boost the response rate by eliminating the need for mailing the survey back to the researcher. In addition, the researcher decided not to use a traditional mail survey because, "There are well documented practical problems with this form of data collection: poor response rates, slow response, and manual transcription of data from a hard copy questionnaire to an appropriate statistical analysis tool."⁹ The Web address for the online questionnaire was http://jackie_tisdell.tripod.com/survey.htm. In order to reach the survey, the exact Web address had to be typed in by respondents. This eliminated random individuals from

finding the survey and entering their responses by accident. In addition, the demographics section of the questionnaire helped determine whether other than out-of-state alumni responded. The use of an online survey was beneficial because of its cost effectiveness and increased ease and efficiency of gathering data, which seemed to outweigh the drawbacks of using the Internet as the channel. Also, once a respondent submitted the online survey he/she was given an option to email the researcher at jeiswir@lsu.edu. This allowed for additional comments and/or questions.

All data from the questionnaire was entered into SPSS for Windows, “one of the most widely used, comprehensive and flexible statistical programs in the social sciences.”¹⁰ All procedures were run through this program to analyze the data. The following is a list of the survey questions used and the statistical programs executed to address each research question.

RQ1. What role did mass media play in the awareness stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette’s new name?

This was determined by asking the respondent how he/she learned of the new university name. The choices were news (print or broadcast), UL Lafayette centennial invitation, *La Louisiane* article, person (word of mouth), or other. A frequency analysis was run because the level of measurement was nominal and non-parametric. Specifications of the “other” choice were reviewed by the researcher and put into categories for generalized reporting.

RQ2. What role did interpersonal communication play in the adoption stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette’s new name?

This was determined by asking the respondent who or what influenced his/her decisions to use the new university name in speech and in writing. The choices were news (print or broadcast), UL Lafayette centennial invitation, *La Louisiane* article, person (word of mouth), or

other. Frequency analyses were used because the level of measurements were nominal and non-parametric. Specifications of the “other” choices were reviewed by the researcher and put into categories for generalized reporting.

RQ3. Were opinion leaders involved in the diffusion of this innovation?

This was determined by asking the respondent how he/she learned of the new university name and who or what influenced his/her decisions to use the new name in speech and writing. Person (word-of-mouth) was an option in all three questions and the respondent was given the ability to specify who or what in the “other” option. In addition, the respondent was asked if he/she ever mentioned the name change to other people or persuaded other alumni to adopt the new name. This questioned whether the respondent was an opinion leader.

Frequency statistical analyses were run because all variables were nominal and non-parametric. In addition, a crosstabulation was run explore the relationship between respondents who mentioned the name change and persuaded other alumni to adopt the new name.

RQ4. Did the innovation add or take away alumni brand loyalty to the university?

This was determined by asking the respondent if his/her loyalty to the university changed since the name change. The options given were more loyal, less loyal, same, and not sure / don’t know. In addition, the level of brand loyalty was measured by asking the respondent in what ways had he/she supported, or are willing to support, the university since the name change. The options given were send your children to UL Lafayette, recommend UL Lafayette to others, donate money to UL Lafayette, purchase a UL Lafayette license plate, purchase a Ragin’ Cajun Visa card, attend athletic events, other, and not sure / don’t know. Further questions that address this issue asked if the respondent believed the new name had a positive or negative effect on

him/her, and if the respondent had difficulties identifying with the university since the name change.

Frequency statistical analyses were run to determine the level of brand loyalty change, the percentage of respondents who felt the new name had a positive or negative effect on them, and the percentage that had difficulties identifying with the university since the name change. Crosstabulations were used to determine that, of the respondents who were more loyal, in what ways were they supporting or were willing to support the university; the relationship between brand loyalty and effects of the name change; and the relationship between brand loyalty and difficulties identifying with the university.

RQ5. Was there a positive relationship between relative advantage and adoption of the new name?

This was determined by asking the respondent if he/she believed the new name to be better than the previous name; if yes, why; and also if he/she used the new name in everyday speech and in writing. Frequencies were run to check percentages, and cross-tabulations with Chi-Square were run to test the relationships between relative advantage and adoption through speech and writing.

RQ6. Did the diffusion of the university name garner the same “S-curve” graph rate of adoption as previous diffusion of innovation research?

This was determined by asking the respondent what month and year he/she started using the new name in speech and in writing. For analyses purposes data was transformed from a string, which allows letters and numbers, to numerical data allowing six digits with two decimal points. For instance, “2001.01” represented “January 2001,” “1999.08” represented “August

1999,” etc. Line graphs were used to depict the rate of adoption over time and compare to the S-curve line graphs.

Further information gathered by respondents through email was grouped into either positive or negative feedback about the new university name. The researcher reported the general findings and included some respondent comments for specific examples of the generalities in the appendixes.

Measurement validity is essential to quantitative research. An important aspect of external validity is a randomly selected sample that represents a larger population.¹¹ Even though this study had a low response rate, it utilized a random sample. In addition, the respondents’ demographics matched closely to the available demographic information of the entire population. For example, the top four states of residence for the entire population of out-of-state alumni was Texas with 37.9%, California with 7.2%, Florida with 6.7%, and Georgia with 5.1%. The top four states of residence for the research respondents was Texas with 32.6%, Florida with 8.2%, Georgia with 6.0%, and California and Colorado, each with 5.4%.

This research study has face validity because a group of three LSU professors of mass communication¹² reviewed, made suggestions to, and approved the study proposal and survey instrument prior to conducting research. The professors believed the instrument accurately measured the proposed research.

3.1 End Notes

¹ Simon-Dronet, J. Interview by author. 19 June 2002. Tape recording. Lafayette, Louisiana.

² Savoie, E. Interview by author. 27 September 2002. Tape recording. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

³ Broussard, S. Personal communication. 19 August 2002. Phone. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Landry, L. Personal communication. 14 October 2002. Email. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁶ Landry, L. Personal communication. 19 November 2002. Email. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁷ Williams, F., Rice, R., & Rogers, E. (1988). Research Methods and the New Media. New York: The Free Press. 63.

⁸ Broussard, S. Personal Communication. 15 September 2002. Email. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁹ Baron, S. Healey, N. & Ilieva, J. (Third Quarter 2002). Online surveys in marketing research: Pros and cons. International Journal of Market Research, 361.

¹⁰ Cramer, D. (1994). Introducing statistics for social research. New York: Routledge. 27.

¹¹ Williams, F., Rice, R., & Rogers, E., 59.

¹² Nelson, R., Sands, G., & Wu, D. 13 September 2002. Thesis Prospectus Defense. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Overall, opinions seemed to be split about the name change. For example, a little over half of the respondents did not use the new name in everyday speech but did use it in writing (see Figure 1). Half of the respondents (91) felt the new name was better than the previous one, while 75 did not (see Table 6). Furthermore, 37.6% respondents felt the new name had a positive effect on them, 29.8% felt the effect was negative and 32.6% were not sure about the effect or didn't know (see Table 4).

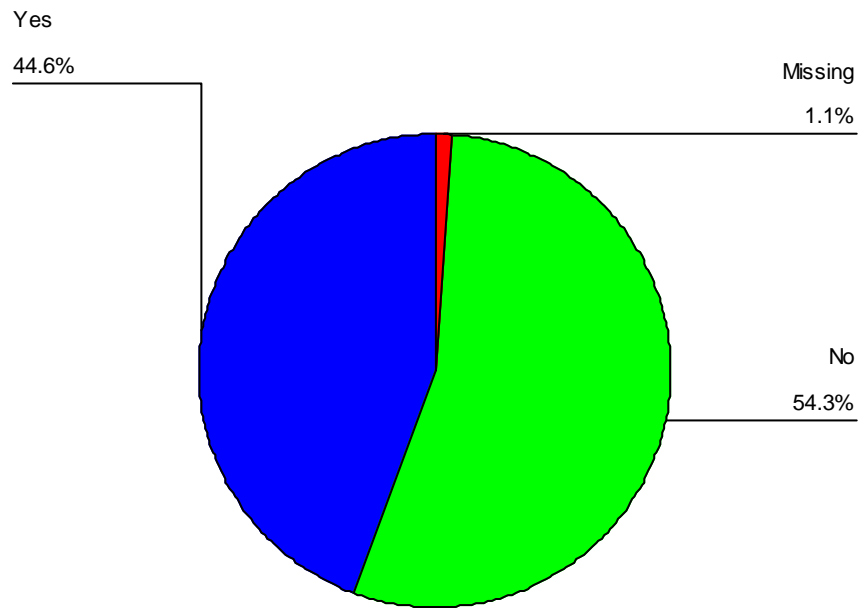
4.1 Demographics

Over half of the respondents were female at 59.2% versus male respondents at 40.2% (see Figure 2). This is comparable to the total population, which is 50.4% female and 49.6% male.¹ The average year of birth was 1959, thus the average respondent age was 43 years old (see Table 1). The birth years ranged from 1928 to 1977, or 74 to 25 year old.

Respondents currently live in 33 different states. The top states were Texas with 60 (32.6%), Florida with 15 (8.2%), Georgia with 11 (6.0%), and California and Colorado, each with 10 (5.4%) (see Figure 3). This compares to the top four states of residence for the entire population, Texas (37.9%), California (7.2%), Florida (6.7%), and Georgia (5.1%) (see Appendix D).

The highest completed level of education for most respondents was an undergraduate degree (54.9%). However, 33.2% of respondents have a master's degree and 11.4% have a doctorate degree. UL Lafayette has awarded a total of 84,361 degrees.² Of those, 87.7% were undergraduate, 11.3% were master's and 0.7% was doctoral.³ A very large percent of respondents work full time (83.7%), while small percents work part time (1.6%), are self-employed (4.3%) or unemployed (4.3%).

Use In Every Day Speech



Use In Every Day Writing

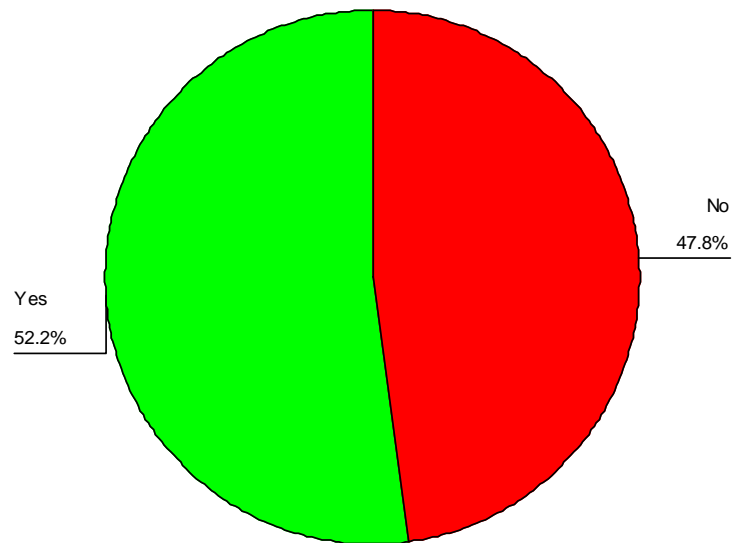


FIGURE 1: USE IN SPEECH AND WRITING

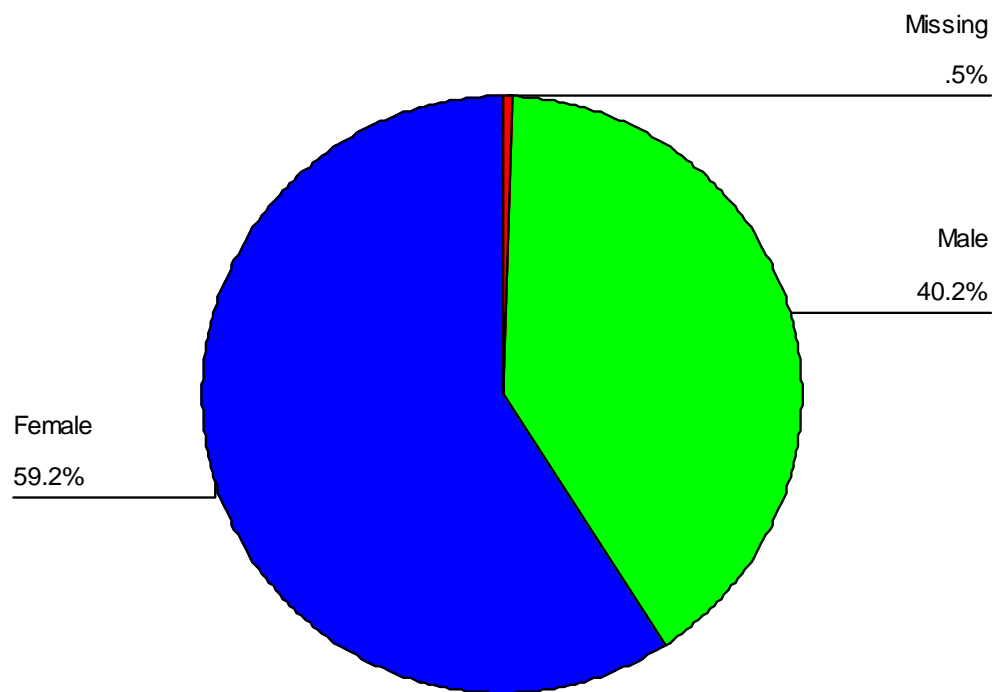


FIGURE 2: GENDER

TABLE 1: DATE OF BIRTH

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Birth Year	183	1928	1977	1958.64	10.674
Valid N (listwise)	183				

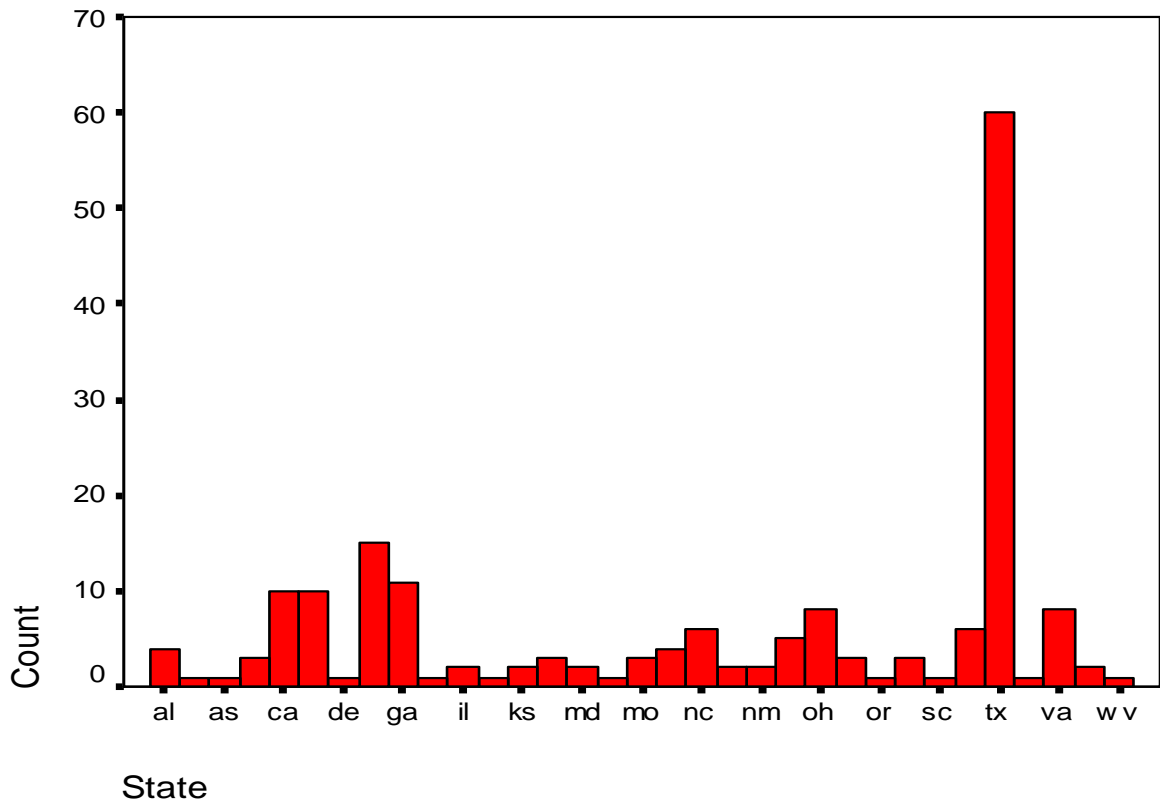


FIGURE 3: STATES OF RESIDENCE

The respondents' dates of graduation from UL Lafayette ranged from 1949 to 2002 with an average date of 1984 (see Figure 4). This meant that the average respondent attended UL Lafayette during its first attempt at a name change. In addition, most respondents graduated from the university prior to the successful name change in 1999.

4.2 Answers to Research Questions

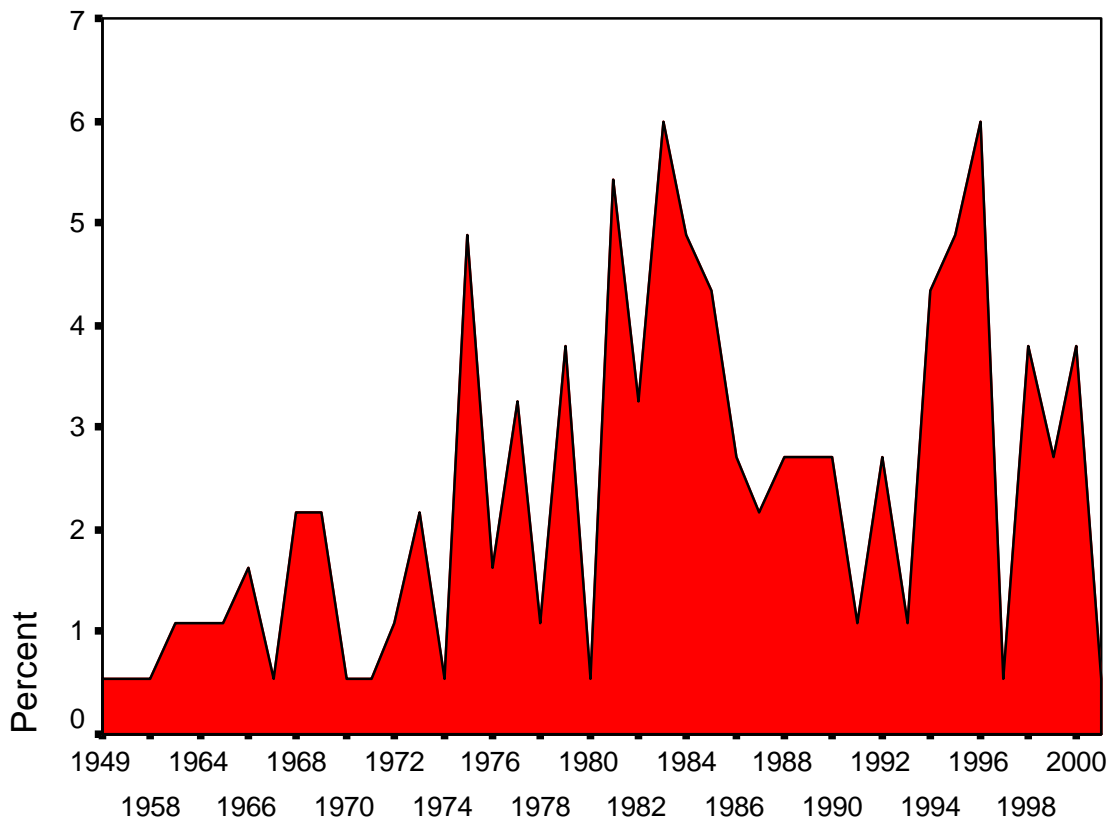
RQ1. What role did mass media play in the awareness stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette's new name?

Mass media did not play a significant role of informing out-of-state alumni in the awareness stage. In fact, news (print and broadcast) and the *La Louisiane* article were reported as the source of information about the name change the least with 15.8% and 3.3% respectively, while person (word of mouth) was utilized the most with 47.8% and the UL Lafayette Centennial Invitation the second highest with 21.7% (see Figure 5).

Several different awareness sources were specified in the "other" area. Of the answers, the most common source was contact with friends and/or family in Lafayette. The second was contact with the university, which included the alumni office, a campus visit and purchasing school merchandise. Perhaps the most surprising sources were "[a] standup comic: they are renaming U.S.L. to University of Louisiana, Lafayette. oo(U) La La" and "I just realized it when I was asked to take this survey..."! Other noteworthy sources were the Internet and email, sports media coverage, and other alumni.

RQ2. What role did interpersonal communication play in the adoption stage of the diffusion of UL Lafayette's new name?

Next to the "other" response, interpersonal communication (person) played the largest role in facilitating the usage of the new name in the speech and writing adoption stage categories



Date of Graduation from UL Lafayette

FIGURE 4: DATE OF GRADUATION FROM UL LAFAYETTE

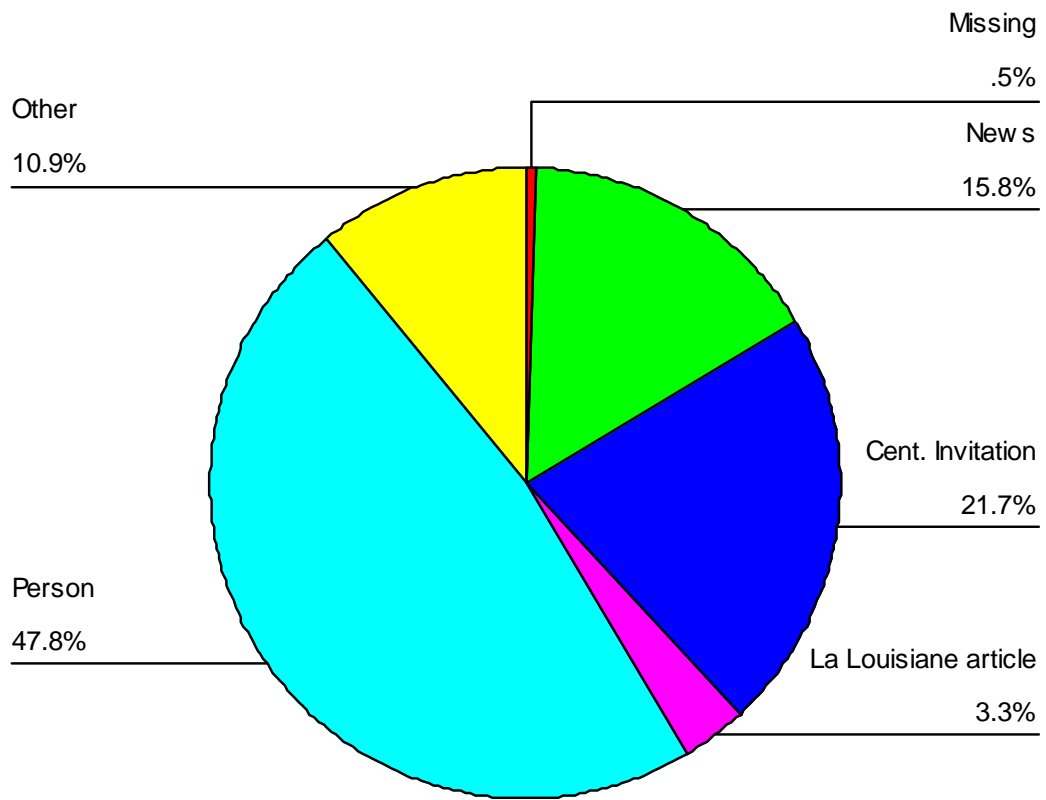


FIGURE 5: NAME CHANGE AWARENESS SOURCE

with 23.5% and 17.6% respectively (see Figure 6). Mass media (news and *La Louisiane* article) played the smallest roles in the adoption stages. There were similarities between the influences on speech use and writing use.

Other was chosen as the most influential for both speech and writing use with 45.7% and 51.8% respectively (see Figure 6). Most respondents who chose “other” stated their influence for using the new name in speech and writing was because it was the correct and/or official name. “My desire for accuracy in referencing the university influenced my decision to accurately refer to my university as UL Lafayette.” Additional reasons were because they felt it was a better, more recognized name with higher prestige; they wanted, or needed to use the proper name on their resumes and job interviews; and because of personal preference. Once again, the most surprising response was, “retelling the ‘U.La.La.’ joke with a Cajun accent.”

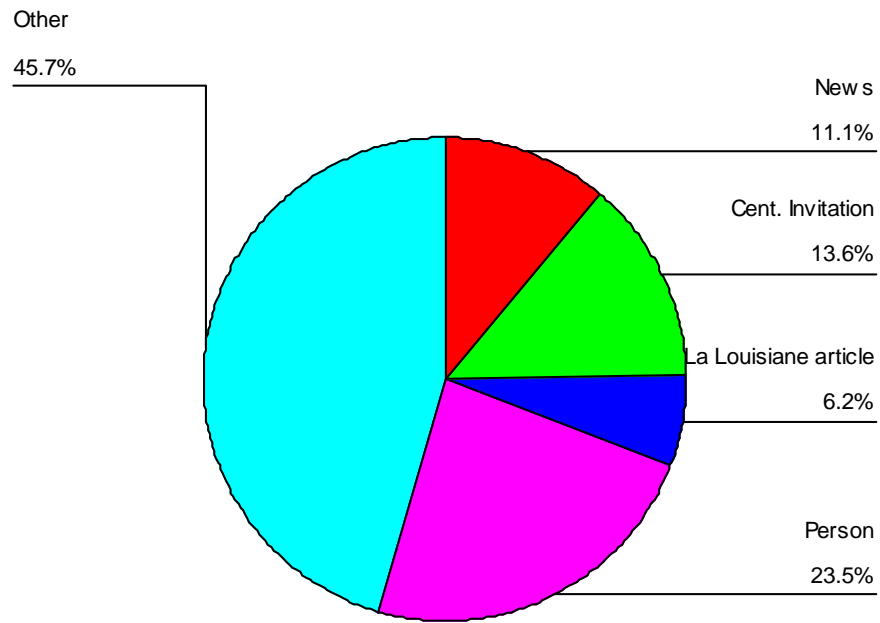
RQ3. Were opinion leaders involved in the diffusion of this innovation?

There was insufficient information to determine the use of opinion leaders even though interpersonal communication was highly used in the diffusion process. It was the largest contributor to the awareness stage (see Figure 5) and the second largest influence on both speech use and writing use (see Figure 6). However, no specific names were mentioned to determine opinion leaders.

There was a possibility that respondents themselves may have served as opinion leaders, but there was not enough evidence to verify that fact. Of the 141 respondents who had mentioned the name change to other people, only 12.1% persuaded other alumni to adopt the new name (see Table 2).

RQ4. Did the innovation add or take away alumni brand loyalty to the university?

Speech Use Influence



Writing Use Influence

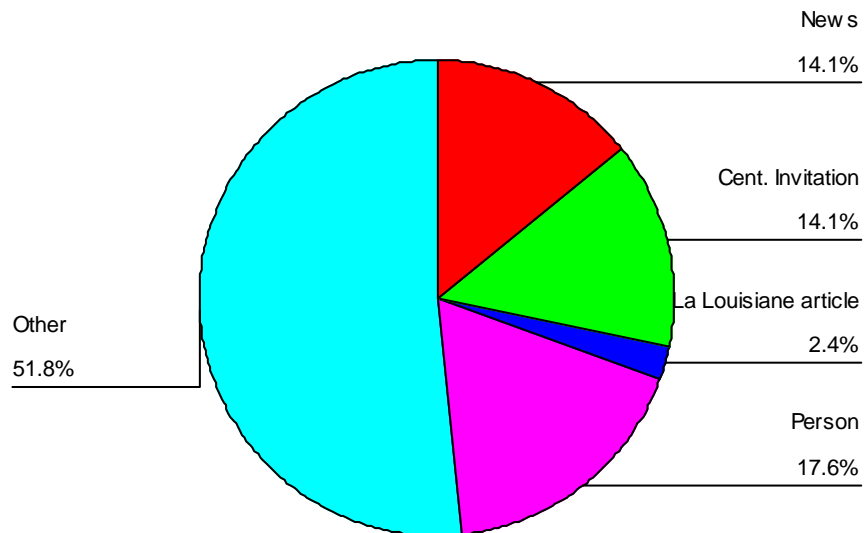


FIGURE 6: INFLUENCES ON SPEECH AND WRITING USE

TABLE 2: PERSUASION BY MENTION

		Persuasion			Total
		Yes	No	Not sure / don't know	
Mention Name Change	Yes	Count	17	113	141
		%	12.1%	80.1%	100.0%
	No	Count	1	33	34
		%	2.9%	97.1%	100.0%
	Not sure / don't know	Count	5	2	7
		%	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	18	151	182
		%	9.9%	83.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 11.098$ $df = 4$ $p = .025$

More respondents were less loyal (19%) to the university than more loyal (8.7%) after the name change. However, the name change had the same effect on the loyalty of most respondents (67.4%) (see Table 3), meaning their loyalty did not change.

Of the 16 respondents who were more loyal to the university after the name change, four have sent or would send their children to UL Lafayette, eight have recommended or would recommend UL Lafayette to others, nine have or would donate money to UL Lafayette, two have purchased or would purchase a UL Lafayette license plate, one has bought or would buy a Ragin' Cajun visa card, and seven have attended or would attend athletic events.

There was a significant relationship between loyalty change and positive/negative effect with $p = .000$ (see Table 4). Out of the respondents who believed the new name had a positive effect on them, 20.6% were also more loyal. However, there was a stronger relationship between negative effect and less loyalty with 53.7%. Even more notable was that no respondent who felt a negative effect from the new name was more loyal to the university after the name change and vice versa.

More than half of respondents (52.4%) who had difficulty identifying with the university after the name change were less loyal to UL Lafayette, while only 13.9% who did not have difficulty identifying were more loyal (see Table 5). This showed a significant relationship ($p = .000$) between loyalty change and difficulty identifying with the university. However, a vast majority (72.1%) of respondents' loyalty either remained the same or they were not sure / didn't know.

RQ5. Was there a positive relationship between relative advantage and adoption of the new name?

TABLE 3: BRAND LOYALTY CHANGE

	n	%
More loyal	16	8.7
Less loyal	35	19.0
Same	124	67.4
Not sure / don't know	9	4.9
Total	184	100.0

TABLE 4: LOYALTY CHANGE BY POSITIVE / NEGATIVE EFFECT

Loyalty Change			Effect			Total
			Positive	Negative	Not sure / don't know	
More loyal	Count		14		2	16
	%		20.6%		3.4%	8.8%
Less loyal	Count			29	6	35
	%			53.7%	10.2%	19.3%
Same	Count		53	20	48	121
	%		77.9%	37.0%	81.4%	66.9%
Not sure / don't know	Count		1	5	3	9
	%		1.5%	9.3%	5.1%	5.0%
Total	Count		68 (37.6%)	54 (29.8%)	59 (32.6%)	181
	%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

$X^2 = 80.031$ $df = 6$ $p = .000$

TABLE 5: LOYALTY CHANGE BY DIFFICULTY OF IDENTIFICATION

Loyalty Change		Count	Difficulty Identifying			Total
			Yes	No	Not sure / don't know	
More loyal	Count	1	15		16	
	%	1.6%	13.9%		8.7%	
Less loyal	Count	33	1	1	35	
	%	52.4%	.9%	8.3%	19.1%	
Same	Count	23	90	10	123	
	%	36.5%	83.3%	83.3%	67.2%	
Not sure / don't know	Count	6	2	1	9	
	%	9.5%	1.9%	8.3%	4.9%	
Total	Count	63	108	12	183	
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

$X^2 = 82.417$ $df = 6$ $p = .000$

Half of all respondents (50.5%) believed the new name was better than the previous name (see Figure 8). However, over half used the new name in writing (52.2%) but did not use the new name in everyday speech (54.3%) (see Figure 1). There was a significant relationship ($p = .000$) and a positive relationship between relative advantage and speech adoption of the new name (see Table 6). A large percentage of respondents (76.9%) who believed the new name to be better also used the new name in everyday speech. In addition, 94.7% of respondents who did not believe the new name to be better did not use the new name in everyday speech. A significant ($p = .000$) and positive relationship existed between relative advantage and writing adoption of the new name (see Table 7) because 79.6% of respondents who believed the new name to be better also used the new name in writing. Furthermore, 82.7% who did not believe the new name to be better did not use the new name in writing.

RQ6. Did the diffusion of the university name garner the same “S-curve” graph rate of adoption as previous Diffusion of Innovation research?

The diffusion of the university name did not yield the same “S-curve” graph rate of adoption as previous diffusion of innovation research. While the rate of adoption for both speech and writing of the new name were similar with some leveling off at the beginning of 2000 and 2002, there were multiple breaks and surges in the adoptions (see Figure 7) instead of two strong surges and one leveling off point as the theory suggests.

4.3 Email Responses

The researcher received 25 email responses from the survey respondents. Most responses were short inquiries about the research or researcher. However, nine responses included negative or positive comments about the new name. Seven respondents were unhappy with the

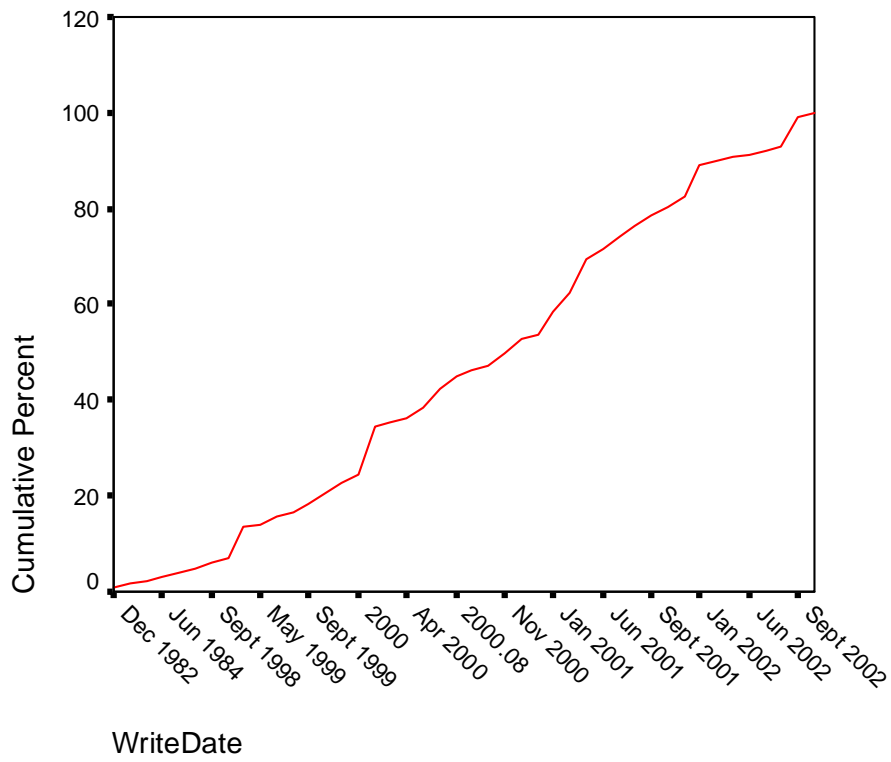
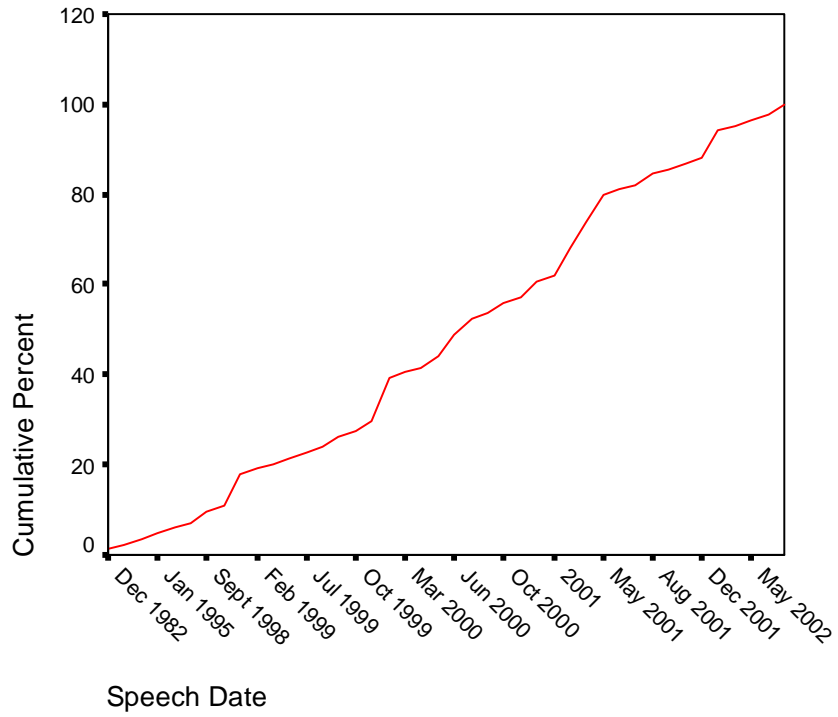


FIGURE 7: SPEECH AND WRITING RATE OF ADOPTION

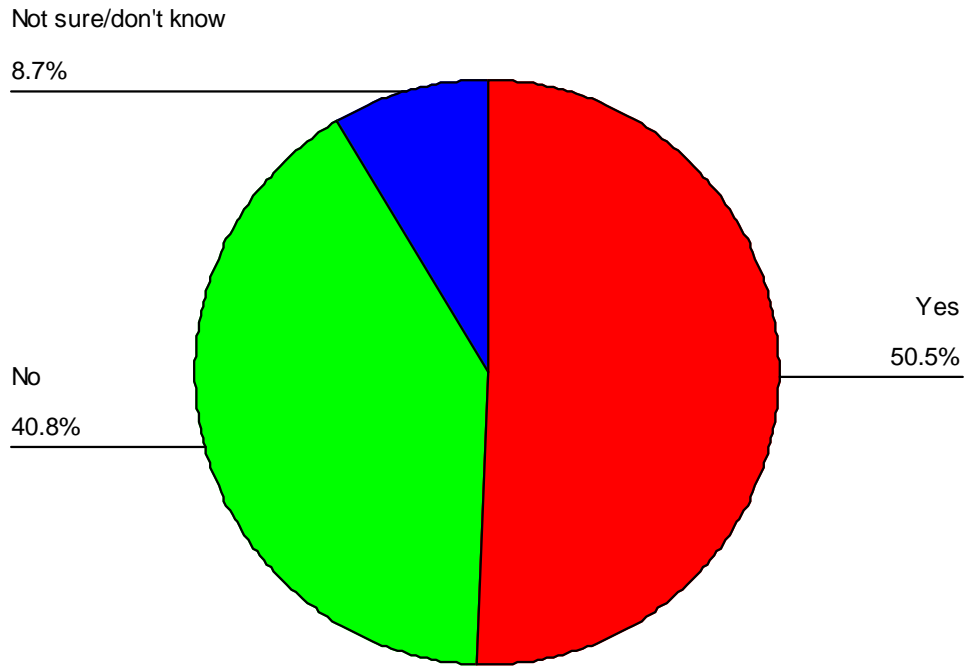


FIGURE 8: RELATIVE ADVANTAGE

TABLE 6: RELATIVE ADVANTAGE BY SPEECH USE

		Use In Every Day Speech			
			No	Yes	Total
Relative Advantage	Yes	Count	21	70	91
		%	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%
	No	Count	71	4	75
		%	94.7%	5.3%	100.0%
	Not sure / don't know	Count	8	8	16
		%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	100	82	182
		%	54.9%	45.1%	100.0%

$X^2 = 85.292$ $df = 2$ $p = .000$

TABLE 7: RELATIVE ADVANTAGE BY WRITING USE

		Use In Every Day Writing			
			No	Yes	Total
Relative Advantage	Yes	Count	19	74	93
		%	20.4%	79.6%	100.0%
	No	Count	62	13	75
		%	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%
	Not sure / don't know	Count	7	9	16
		%	43.8%	56.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	88	96	184
		%	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

$X^2 = 64.564$ $df = 2$ $p = .000$

new name, while two respondents commented favorably about the new name. See Appendix E for actual email responses.

4.4 Alumni Donations

Between 1994 and 2001, University of Louisiana at Lafayette alumni donations ranged from \$237,411 in 1999 to \$316,818 in 1996. The average donation amount from 1994 to 1998 was \$284,374, and the average donation amount from 1999 to 2001 was \$253,885. In addition, 1999 had the least amount of donors with 4,004, down from 5,288 in 1998 (See Appendix G).

4.5 End Notes

¹ Landry, L. Personal communication. 14 October 2002. Email. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

² Landry, L. Personal communication. 20 November 2002. Email. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

³ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The year of 2002 is coming to a close. More than three years have gone by since the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (UL Lafayette) celebrated the long-awaited birth of its new name. Yet, the university's out-of-state alumni are torn between embracing the new university name and remaining loyal to the name inscribed on their diplomas.

UL Lafayette's public relations campaign to introduce and promote the new name, although comprehensive, reached less than half of their out-of-state alumni (see Figure 5). Nevertheless, by studying the reach and influence of the public relations campaign in introducing an important marketing concept, branding, this researcher was able to test diffusion of innovations theory outside of its typical criteria.

Background information for this study analyzed the public relations campaign post-name change by using Jerry A. Hendrix's ROPE model¹, explored previous diffusion of innovations research, and explored the importance of brand names to products and specifically higher education institutions. This background information set up a framework for testing diffusion of innovations theory with a marketing innovation. A survey was administered to a random sample of UL Lafayette out-of-state alumni to determine their opinions of the new university name, the rate of adoption of the new name, and the modes of communication utilized in the diffusion process.

Most innovation diffusion research is technological in nature, meaning the innovation has been scientifically or technologically based. By testing a marketing concept, the researcher explored a new branch of diffusion of innovations. One similarity between previous research and this study was the use of interpersonal communication during the adoption stage. According

to the results, person (word-of-mouth) was the second greatest influence for both speech and writing use.

However, an interesting occurrence was that “other” was chosen as the most influential in adopting the innovation. The intriguing part was that when grouping the specified “other” comments the researcher found most influences had to do with personal choice or need to accurately reflect the correct name. The influences of personal choice, logic, and/or practical need were not mentioned in previous diffusion of innovations research studies. This could mean two very different things, 1) previous innovation diffusion research failed to recognize the importance of personal choice, logic, and/or practical need in influencing the adopter to use an innovation, or 2) all adopters must exercise their own logic and personal choice when deciding to adopt an innovation, thus making these factors a given and not true external influences on adoption. The researcher believes the latter, and with this logic in mind, interpersonal communication becomes the main external influence on use of the new university name in speech and writing, thus supporting previous research findings.

While the adoption stage of innovation diffusion followed the pattern of previous research, something went very wrong in the awareness stage. Frank Bass’s 1969 model showed mass media to be the primary component in the awareness stage, while interpersonal communication came into play during adoption.² However, out-of-state alumni listed interpersonal communication, i.e. person (word-of-mouth), as the primary mode of awareness of the new name while mass media, i.e. News and the *La Louisiane* article, came in last (see Figure 5). The reason for this discrepancy may have been because the national media did not cover the story extensively due to the regional, not national, effects the name change may have had. Therefore, alumni living outside of Louisiana may not have had access to the announcement

through the media and instead learned of it through other channels, such as friends or family living in Lafayette, as specified in the “other” results of the awareness question.

The use of opinion leaders was another important aspect in previous diffusion of innovations research. Because of the strong use of interpersonal communication during both the awareness and adoption stages of the new name, there was a high possibility that opinion leaders were utilized. However, the survey design did not allow listing of specific names when a respondent chose “person (word-of-mouth).” This limitation yielded insufficient data to verify the use of opinion leaders in the diffusion of the new university name. However, through questioning the respondents about their mentioning of and persuading others to use the new name, the results again showed there was a possibility that some respondents acted as opinion leaders (see Table 2). However, more data was needed to verify this point.

Another important aspect of diffusion of innovations research explored by this study was the effectiveness of relative advantage in adopting an innovation. Mike Chiasson and Chris Y. Lovato (2001) defined relative advantage as “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes.”³ The positive relationship between relative advantage and innovation adoption that existed in this study (see Tables 6 & 7) adhered to the pattern of previous innovation diffusion research.

Up until this point, with the exception of interpersonal communication taking the place of mass media during the awareness phase, this study followed previous diffusion of innovations research results. However, it failed to meet the most important aspect of diffusion of innovations, the S-curve graph. Actual diffusion is measured by the rate of adoption over time. It characterizes an S-curve because there are few early adopters, but once the early adopters, or opinion leaders, communicate with their peers, a rapid growth of adoption occurs, which then

tapers off as the few late adopters finish the process.⁴ In the case of this study, there was no rapid growth of adopters, just a slow steady increase with a few minor jumps and stalls (see Figure 7).

A possible reason for this discrepancy was the use of interpersonal communication during the awareness phase. In previous innovation diffusion research, the jump in adoption occurred after initial awareness and during interpersonal communication. However, because the respondents were confronted with interpersonal communication from the beginning, they may have had to base a decision to adopt on other factors not usually considered in this type of research. Furthermore, the introduction of a new, short-lived name in 1984 may have confused the awareness and adoption of the UL Lafayette name in 1999 by some respondents.

The innovation studied in this thesis was the brand name of a university. The importance of a brand to a product is critical to the success of that product. Higher education institutions are no exception to this rule. Louisiana State University System President William Jenkins agreed, “Branding of university names is important and it’s going to be more important as we move into a competitive, changing environment.”⁵ The highest level of success a brand can reach is brand loyalty. This means that a consumer will always choose a product, no matter the extra costs.⁶ In this case, costs could mean financially or abstractly/conceptually (as in costing a sense of belonging, etc). Most out-of-state alumni’s loyalty to the university stayed the same through the name change. However, of the respondents whose loyalty changed, the majority were less loyal after the name change (see Table 3). In order to explore the different levels of loyalty to the university post name change, respondents were asked how they have or would support the university. Out of their choices, most responded they would donate money; others would recommend the university to potential students; and some would attend athletic events. In

addition, the strong relationship between less loyalty to the university and those who felt the new name had a negative effect on them provided content validity for the study. Furthermore, the same negative trend followed those who had difficulty identifying with the university after the name change; they were less loyal.

The email responses that addressed the name change sent to the researcher upon completion of the survey were mostly negative in nature towards the new name. Data showed that opinions about the new name were mostly split, so the researcher believed there was a simple explanation for the overwhelmingly negative emails: the respondents who were upset with the name change felt more of a need to express their opinions than those who were happy or content about the change. Perhaps this was the first opportunity these out-of-state alumni had to voice their opinions of the new name as expressed by this individual:

“i just completed your survey – i've hated the name change from when i first heard about it in one of the alumni magazines – but what can be done at this late date – it seems like there could have been a ground swell of negative reactions if we, the alumni, had been notified BEFORE the name change became official – and i resented the fact that no input was requested of the alumns...”⁷

It is easy to understand why alumni would feel so passionate about the changed name of their university. They could feel displaced and not identify with their alma mater as did one individual who graduated from both USL and NLU, now UL Lafayette and ULM, “I feel as though my degrees are now worth less than they are because the actual names of the universities no longer exist.”⁸ In the same respect, those who feel the new name is an improvement upon the previous one, may feel their degrees carry more weight when presented in resumes or job interviews. There is no right or wrong answer, just personal preference.

So what does this study mean to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette? Its out-of-state alumni approval rating of the new name was mostly split. Almost half of the respondents used the new name in everyday speech and a little more than half used it in everyday writing (see Figure 1). This was significantly lower than the low to mid nineties approval rating UL Lafayette Director of News and Public Affairs, Julie Simon-Dronet, expected from the local area.⁹ In addition, while the public relations campaign did reach some out-of-state alumni, most learned of the new name through word-of-mouth and most were influenced to use the new name by other persons rather than by the university or university publications. The researcher also learned that the out-of-state alumni that approved and adopted the new name are also valuable supporters of the university through recruitment and funding. However, those who did not approve and adopt the new name now feel disconnected from their alma mater and do not choose to support it. The university lost over 1,000 donors and over \$50,000 in alumni donations from 1998 to 1999, showing a possible link between the name change and alumni financial support (see Appendix G). Because alumni can offer valuable support to a university this researcher feels UL Lafayette may want to implement a campaign that targets out-of-state alumni to make them aware of the benefits the new university name can give them, and if nothing else, make them feel like they are still a part of the university by giving them a voice.

5.1 Limitations

A major limitation of this research study was the low response rate. Only 10 percent of the random 10 percent sample completed the survey. This meant that the findings of this research study might not represent the general consensus of the total population of out-of-state alumni, thus affecting its external validity. If the UL Lafayette alumni address list was outdated, it may have contributed to the low response rate. Nonetheless, low response rates for web-based

surveys are not uncommon. “Comley (2000) summarizes the response rates of all virtual surveys in 1999, and most were in the range 15% to 29%.”¹⁰ Possible improvements upon response rate might have come from follow-up reminders or utilization of email instead of a mail-out letter. However, these options were unavailable due to lack of access to email addresses and spiraling costs to the researcher. Nevertheless, because of the comparative demographic data of the respondents and the total population, the researcher believed this study still presented valuable data for discussion and use.

Another limitation to this research was that out-of-state alumni might not be representative of the entire alumni population. The researcher selected out-of-state alumni because of their lack of prior knowledge of the innovation. However, because of their small numbers compared to in-state alumni and their physical detachment from the university, there may be significant differences in the attitudes towards the new name.

A final limitation was the use of an online survey. Subjects that did not have access to a computer and the Internet could not complete the survey. “[S]uch data collection techniques may often result in a sample of respondents that is not representative of the desired population.”¹¹ In addition, online surveys, which use new technology, may scare away older respondents, who may not have the skills to participate. This limitation could have been addressed by using a mail-back survey, but this would have meant increased time and cost, plus some research has shown that electronic surveys yield almost 20 percent higher response rates than mail surveys.¹²

5.2 Future Research

This study could be a pioneer in using the concept of a university name brand to test diffusion of innovations theory. While the results of this research do not follow all the

precursors to innovation diffusion research, it still adds valuable information to the body of work. Future research should be done to test other marketing concepts in the diffusion of innovations process to see if the same patterns emerge.

Further ways to research UL Lafayette's name change could include surveying faculty that came to the university after 1999 or did not but considered it, and inquire if the name change had any influence on their decisions. Also, analyzing research funding prior to the name change compared to funding after the name change would be a way to measure the effects of the new name.

In addition, it would be interesting to test the diffusion of the University of Louisiana at Monroe's new name. Both institutions changed their names at the same time, and comparisons could be made between the public relations campaigns of both universities and the effectiveness of the diffusions. There may be major differences because UL Lafayette had the advantage of a long pre-name change campaign. LSU System President Jenkins' observations alluded to this, "Those who graduated from USL may or may not be pleased with it. ULM, I happen to know some Northeast graduates who would prefer it to still be Northeast, but change is difficult for everyone and it takes time for these things to lock in."¹³ Testing the perceptions of the new names versus the previous names would add to research on branding for higher education.

5.3 End Notes

¹ Hendrix, J. (2001). Public Relations Cases. Fifth Edition. Stamford: Wadsworth Thompson Learning. vi.

² Bass, F. Mahajoan, V., & Muller, E. (1990). New Product Diffusion Models in Marketing: A Review And Dir. Journal of Marketing, 1.

³ Chaisson, M. & Lovato, C. (2001). Factors influencing the formation of a user's perceptions and use of a DSS software innovation. Database for Advances in Information Systems, 18.

⁴ Rogers, E. & Singhal, A. (1996). Diffusion of Innovations. In M. Salwen & D. Stacks (Eds.), An Integrated Approach to Communication Theory and Research. (Ch. 26, 412, 418). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

⁵ Jenkins, W. Phone interview by author. 17 October 2002. Tape recording. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

⁶ Trombetta, W. (2001). Leap of faith branding and ROI. Pharmaceutical Executive, 9.

⁷ Appendix E.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Simon-Dronet, J. Interview by author. 19 June 2002. Tape recording. Lafayette, Louisiana.

¹⁰ Baron, S. Healey, N. & Ilieva, J. (Third Quarter 2002). Online surveys in marketing research: Pros and cons. International Journal of Market Research, 366.

¹¹ Ibid., 361.

¹² Ibid., 366.

¹³ Jenkins, W. Phone interview by author. 17 October 2002. Tape recording. Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

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APPENDIX A. QUESTIONNAIRE LETTER

September 16, 2002

Dear Alumnus/Alumna,

I am conducting research on the name change of the University of Southwestern Louisiana to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Alumni are important to the university, which makes your contribution to this research essential.

Please take a few minutes of your time to visit this web site, http://jackie_tisdell.tripod.com/survey.htm, to fill out a short, anonymous questionnaire.

Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Jackie Eiswirth Tisdell

APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Gender: ___Male ___Female
2. Year of Birth: ___(yyyy)
3. In what state do you currently live (country if not in the United States)?
4. Highest completed level of education:
 ___Undergraduate ___Master's
 ___Doctorate ___None of the above
5. Employment status:
 ___Full time ___Part time
 ___Unemployed ___Self employed ___Other
6. What year did you graduate from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, formerly University of Southwestern Louisiana?
7. When did you learn of the university name change? ___/___ (mm/yyyy)
8. How did you learn of the name change?
 ___News (print or broadcast) ___UL Lafayette Centennial Invitation
 ___*La Louisiane* article ___Person (word-of-mouth)
 ___Other (Please list)_____
9. Do you believe University of Louisiana at Lafayette is a better name than University of Southwestern Louisiana?
 ___Yes ___No ___Not sure / don't know
10. If you answered yes to question 9, why do you believe UL Lafayette is a better name? (Check all that apply)
 ___Help recruit students ___Help recruit faculty
 ___Help compete for grants ___Attract Division I athletic teams
 ___Other (Please specify)_____
11. Do you believe the new name has a positive or negative effect on you?
 ___Positive ___Negative ___Not sure / don't know
12. Why do you believe the new name has a positive or negative effect on you?
13. Do you use the new name when referring to the university in everyday speech?
 ___Yes
 ___No (If you chose no, skip to Question 16)
14. If yes, when did you first start using the new name? ___/___ (mm/yyyy)

15. Who or what influenced your decision to use the new university name in speech?
 News (print or broadcast) UL Lafayette Centennial Invitation
 La Louisiane article Person (word-of-mouth)
 Other (Please list) _____
16. Do you use the new name when referring to the university in writing, (e.g., your résumé, email, other)?
 Yes
 No (If you chose no, skip to Question 19)
17. If yes, when did you first start using the new name? ___/___(mm/yyyy)
18. Who or what influenced your decision to use the new university name in writing?
 News (print or broadcast) UL Lafayette Centennial Invitation
 La Louisiane article Person (word-of-mouth)
 Other (Please list) _____
19. Did you ever mention the name change to other people?
 Yes No Not sure / don't know
20. Did you ever persuade other alumni to adopt the new name?
 Yes No Not sure / don't know
21. Do you have difficulties identifying with the university since the name change?
 Yes No Not sure / don't know
22. Has your loyalty to the university changed since the name change?
 More loyal Less loyal
 Same Not sure / don't know
23. In what ways have you supported, or are willing to support, UL Lafayette since the name change? (Check all that apply)
 Send your children to UL Lafayette Recommend UL Lafayette to others
 Donate money to UL Lafayette Purchase a UL Lafayette license plate
 Purchase a Ragin' Cajun Visa card Attend athletic events
 Other (Please specify) _____ Not sure/don't know

**APPENDIX C. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WITH DOUBLE-DIRECTIONAL
NAMES IN 1999**

<u>University Name</u>	<u>City/State</u>	<u>Total Enrollment</u>
Southeastern Bible College	Birmingham, AL	160
Southwestern College	Phoenix, AR	174
Southeastern University	Washington, D.C.	500 approx.
Southeastern College of Assemblies of God	Lakeland, FL	1,130
Southeastern University of the Health Sciences	North Miami Beach, FL	1,500
Georgia Southwestern College	Americus, GA	2,500-2,600
Northwestern College	Orange City, IA	1,141
Northwest Nazarene College	Nampa, ID	1,200
East-West University	Chicago, IL	300
North Central College	Naperville, IL	2,446
Northeastern Illinois University	Chicago, IL	10,000 approx.
Northwestern University	Evanston, IL	
Southwestern College	Winfield, KS	752
Northeast Louisiana University	Monroe, LA	11,379
Northwestern State University	Natchitoches, LA	8,761
Southeastern Louisiana University	Hammond, LA	13,912
University of Southwestern Louisiana	Lafayette, LA	16,753
Northeastern University	Boston, MA	20,000
Northwestern College	St. Paul, MN	1,269
Southwest State University	Marshall, MN	2,735
North Central Bible College	Minneapolis, MN	1,056
Southeastern Baptist College	Laurel, MS	101
Northeast Missouri State University	Kirksville, MO	6,000 approx.
Northwest Missouri State University	Maryville, MO	6,000 approx.
Southeast Missouri State University	Cape Girardeau, MO	8,000 approx.
Southwest Baptist University	Bolivar, MO	1,900 approx.
Southwest Missouri State University	Springfield, MO	18,300
College of the Southwest	Hobbs, NM	400
East Central University	Ada, OK	4,000
Northeastern State University	Tahlequah, OK	9,374
Northwestern Oklahoma State University	Alva, OK	1,870
Southeastern Oklahoma State University	Durant, OK	4,000 approx.
Southwestern College of Christian Ministries	Bethany, OK	228
Southwestern Oklahoma State University	Weatherford, OK	5,000 approx.
Northwest Christian College	Eugene, OR	421
Pacific Northwest College of Art	Portland, OR	237
Midwestern State University	Wichita Falls, TX	5,821
Southwestern Adventist College	Kelene, TX	978
Southwestern Assemblies of God College	Waxahachie, TX	1,007
Southwestern Christian College	Terrell, TX	193
Southwest University	Georgetown, TX	1,200 approx.

Southwest Texas State University	San Marcos, TX	20,932
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas	Dallas, TX	800 (Medical school)
Northwest College of Assemblies of God	Kirkland, WA	839
Northwestern College	Watertown, WI	197
Southwestern Community College in California		16,039
Southwestern Community College in Iowa		1,180
Southwestern Michigan Community College		2,834
Southwest Mississippi Junior College		1,520
Southwestern Community College in North Carolina		1,521
Southwestern Oregon Community College		1,924
Southwest Texas Junior College		2,859
Southwestern Assemblies of God College in Texas		4,640
Southwest Virginia Community College		4,551

Source: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Public Relations and News Services

APPENDIX D. UL LAFAYETTE ALUMNI BY STATE

Armed Services	50	Nebraska	60
Alaska	56	Nevada	84
Alabama	470	New Hampshire	29
Arkansas	260	New Jersey	217
Arizona	204	New Mexico	144
California	1,392	New York	408
Canada	3	Ohio	230
Colorado	493	Oklahoma	325
Connecticut	93	Oregon	121
District of Columbia	93	Pennsylvania	221
Delaware	29	Puerto Rico	61
Florida	1,340	Rhode Island	26
Georgia	981	South Carolina	182
Hawaii	38	South Dakota	7
Iowa	54	Tennessee	418
Idaho	31	Texas	7,281
Illinois	308	Utah	42
Indiana	104	Virginia	563
Kansas	111	Virgin Islands	2
Kentucky	107	Vermont	16
Louisiana	56,029	Washington	225
Massachusetts	186	West Virginia	31
Maryland	280	Wisconsin	72
Maine	21	Wyoming	23
Michigan	189		
Minnesota	113	TOTAL	75,257
Missouri	218		
Mississippi	743		
Montana	33	Total July 2001:	55,331
North Carolina	432	Total July 2000:	52,657
North Dakota	10	Total July 1999:	49,783

Source: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Development Office

APPENDIX E. SELECTED EMAIL RESPONSES

“I am extremely displeased with the name change...I suspect that when you evaluate my response, it will imply that I am mildly in disagreement, but in fact I am in intense disagreement. It should be noted that I, my wife and my son all are graduates of USL. We are all extremely disappointed in the name change and no longer identify with the university.”

“Thanks for taking the time to set up a survey! I am very proud of where I went!!! The name change has confused other people...and I continuously have to repeat formerly USL!!!!”

“Thank you so much for sending me the letter and inviting me to take the survey. Personally, I don't like the new name at all. I have no clue as to why they changed it. On my resume I still use USL and will continue to do so. Thank you again.”

“i just completed your survey – i've hated the name change from when i first heard about it in one of the alumni magazines – but what can be done at this late date – it seems like there could have been a ground swell of negative reactions if we, the alumni, had been notified BEFORE the name change became official – and i resented the fact that no input was requested of the alumns...”

“I just answered your survey...graduated in 1981 from USL. I was very disappointed when the name was changed since I graduated from “USL” not UL or ULL.”

“...Most people don’t know where USL is! I suppose the name change at least solves that mystery.”

“I received your survey, which surprised me because I did not think that the addresses of alumni were public. I do, however have to say, I HATE THE NAME CHANGE! I went to USL, I LOVED USL, and I wish it were USL again...I also got a second undergrad degree and my MBA from NLU, which has had a name change as well. I feel as though my degrees are now worth less than they are because the actual names of the universities no longer exist.”

APPENDIX F. NEWS RELEASES

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

News Release

June 25, 1993

The Tennessee Board of Regents unanimously approved changing Memphis State University's name to The University of Memphis Friday morning.

"I am thrilled with the outcome," said MSU President V. Lane Rawlins, after the board acted during its quarterly meeting at Northeast State Technical Community College in Blountville. "This has been a community-wide effort and we know it is something that our community, both on campus and off campus, wanted to happen."

The name change had received endorsements from numerous individuals, from the faculty, alumni and students of the University, and several news media.

The change is subject to approval by the Tennessee General Assembly when it meets in January. Governor Ned McWherter, who chairs the Board of Regents, joined with the rest of the board in voting for the change.

Although the name change was not on the quarterly TBR meeting agenda, it was brought up and co-sponsored by regents Dr. J.D. Johnson of Oak Ridge, Robert Fishman of Morristown and William W. Farris of Memphis, all Memphis State alumni. Farris is vice-chairman of the board.

The change of the name to one that more effectively describes the University's role as a leading urban research and resource university had been widely discussed after Dr. Rawlins' Task Force on Community Relations/Image made the recommendation last June.

The name change was on the March regents' agenda, but a vote was delayed for more study to be done by the TBR staff, which has since been completed.

Rawlins said he hopes the legislature will vote to put the name change into effect July 1, 1994. Memphis State College became Memphis State University on July 1, 1957.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE
News Release

CONTACT: CHRISTINE PAYTON

#456

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 27, 1999

Today. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette

LAFAYETTE – The University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

That's the new name of the state's second largest university, which has been known as The University of Southwestern Louisiana since 1960.

At the same time, Northeast Louisiana University will become The University of Louisiana at Monroe.

The Board of Supervisors for State Colleges and Universities gave its blessing to the name changes Friday during its regular monthly meeting. The Board of Regents had approved the new name Thursday.

The Louisiana Legislature had paved the way for the name change in 1995, when it approved Acts 45 and 634. That measure granted permission to members of The University of Louisiana System to change their names to The University of Louisiana, at their geographic location, provided that at least two universities requested name changes at the same time.

For name change proponents, the designation as The University of Louisiana at Lafayette is a victory that comes after a 20-year struggle to cast off a double-directional, regional name that they said hindered the university's ability to be recognized for what it has become—a significant Doctoral II university that has earned national recognition in many areas, such as computer science and biological and environmental sciences.

"It's difficult to convey the tremendous positive effect the new name will have on the university and its future," said Dr. Ray P. Authement, president of what is now The University of Louisiana at Lafayette. "The Board of Supervisors couldn't have given a better gift for the university's 100th birthday."

This is the fourth name the school has had since it was established in 1900 as Southwestern Lafayette Industrial Institute. The name was changed to Southwestern Lafayette Institute in 1921, when SLII became a four-year college. It was renamed The University of Southwestern Louisiana when it achieved university status in 1960.

For a few weeks in 1984, USL became the University of Louisiana when the Board of Supervisors for State Colleges and Universities voted to allow USL to become The University of Louisiana. But after legal challenges, the university was quickly stripped of its new name and forced to revert to The University of Southwestern Louisiana.

"The university has earned a name change because of its achievements," Authement said. "It is prepared for a new century as The University of Louisiana at Lafayette."

University of Louisiana at Lafayette athletic teams will keep their unique and popular "Ragin' Cajuns" nickname.

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Proponents of the name change have argued for decades that USL's "double-directional, regional" name did not reflect its size or stature. Most schools in the United States with designations such as "southwestern" or "northeastern" in their names are two-year community colleges with average enrollments of 2,100 students. The average enrollment for a handful of four-year colleges and universities with double-directional names is about 5,400.

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette, in contrast, has about 17,000 students. The University of Louisiana at Monroe has 10,500.

"Dr. Lawson Swearingen, president of the University of Louisiana at Monroe, and its administration, faculty, staff, students and alumni are to be commended for taking this bold step. The University of Louisiana at Lafayette has had the benefit of two decades of preparation," Authement said.

He also thanked state lawmakers, members of the Board of Supervisors for State Colleges and Universities, and the Board of Regents for the opportunity to change USL's name.

"This represents a spirit of cooperation that is vital if Louisiana higher education institutions are to get the national respect they deserve," he said.

According to Authement, the new name will improve The University of Louisiana at Lafayette's ability to:

- Recruit top-notch faculty and students;
- Compete for the nation's top scientists and most prestigious grants; and
- Attract more Division I athletic teams to compete with the Ragin' Cajuns.

He said it will also increase the perceived value of academic degrees awarded by the university and increase donor's pride in their affiliation with the university.

"This name change has tremendous value for current and future students," said Ferris Wheeler, SGA President. "The University of Louisiana at Lafayette name will greatly enhance the perceived value of attending this university and of degrees granted to students. The new name will result in many long-term benefits for students, such as continued growth of the university and its offerings."

Steve Oats, president of the USL Alumni Association, said, "Alumni throughout the nation are celebrating today as this university's long-held dream comes true. The image of their university has just been rightfully enhanced. I'd like to commend the university's thousands of graduates for supporting the name change and patiently awaiting this day."

The name change is the second momentous step for The University of Southwestern Louisiana this year. It has already begun to implement selective admissions, which strengthens entrance requirements. In the past, any high school graduate was eligible to attend USL. Now, students who enroll must have achieved specific grade point averages and performance levels on standardized testing, such as the SAT or ACT.

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHWESTERN LOUISIANA
Memorandum

To: USL Faculty and Staff
From: Julie Dronet, Director
Public Relations and News Services
Date: 31 August, 1999
Re: Our New Name, What to Do With It and When

As you all know, it's now a "done-deal." We have the right to call ourselves The University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

So many supporters fought the name change battle for almost two decades. With "USL 100 Centennial Spectacular"—the opening ceremonies for our Centennial Celebration—only 10 days away, a decision was made to make the name change effective when USL students, faculty, staff, alumni and various constituencies can be present to experience history in the making. This history will, of course, be the actual moment that the university declares its change from The University of Southwestern Louisiana to The University of Louisiana at Lafayette. The name change will add a very special and memorable touch to the already spectacular performance planned for Friday, Sept. 10, at 7:30 p.m. at the Cajundome. It's an evening you won't want to miss.

I have received many, many phone calls about how we should proceed over the next few days. We ask that our university community continue to use our USL name until after Sept. 10, 1999. On Sept. 10, we will declare that we are The University of Louisiana at Lafayette (with an official abbreviation of UL Lafayette.) What a perfect time for a name change – our 100th birthday! Please assist by continuing to use the name USL for only 10 more days. FYI: in Athletics, we will be "Louisiana's Ragin' Cajuns."

We encouraged the local media to provide as much news coverage as they could last Friday and over the weekend using the new name, and we're thrilled that our campus community has had a chance to celebrate and have so much fun with the change. New logos, marks, and designs for stationery and business cards are ready to go, when the time is right (after Sept. 10.) We look forward to assisting you with any requests in the very near future.

Thank you so much for your assistance and spirit. There has never been a more exciting time at this university.

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE
News Release

CONTACT: CHRISTINE PAYTON

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 9, 1999

CENTENNIAL SPECTACULAR EXCITEMENT RISING

LAFAYETTE – On Friday, USL's history through the past century will take center stage at the Cajundome as dancers, singers and a whole cast of other individuals celebrate the university's 100th birthday.

Starting at 7:30 p.m., a group of students, alumni and faculty – both past and present – will gather for the Centennial Spectacular. This event is serving as opening ceremonies for a year-long celebration of USL's Centennial.

"We've got it all," said James Edmunds, co-producer and script writer for the show. "We're going to look back throughout the night on events that led up to the school we know today and we're also going to look into the future to see where we are headed. We're going to celebrate our past and our future all together."

This evening of excitement will feature events and happenings in each decade as the school evolved, said Edmunds. "We've got a wonderful cast who are all helping put this together," said Edmunds. "We're going to use song, dance and video to interpret our history."

Carol Ross, co-producer with Edmunds, agreed. "This will be a night to remember," said Ross. "We've got a multidimensional show that will amaze the audience. This kind of production featuring USL has never been done before. This will be something for everyone to see."

Ross and Edmunds said that for example, there is a live action dance sequence coupled with specially edited video-taped segments that will fill the Cajundome with a rich mélange of visual imagery and exciting sounds.

In addition to these sequences, audience members will be entertained by the USL Marching Band and current and former cheerleaders among other special guests.

"We have a lot of surprises in store for Friday night," said Edmunds. "No one will want to miss it."

The Spectacular will start off with a procession well in excess of 1,000 individuals. Organizers said the march will include students, alumni, faculty, school administrators and other special guests including family members from each of the five presidents who served at USL.

"We are so glad to have these family members returning to USL," said USL President Dr. Ray Authement of family members representing Edwin Stephens, Lether Frazer, Joel Fletcher and Clyde Rougeou. "These are such special times for us with our recent name change and selective admissions policy implementation. We are thankful that they will be with us to celebrate our 100th birthday and we invite everyone in Acadiana to come to the Cajundome Friday night."

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Doors for the Centennial Spectacular will open at 6 p.m. along with “USL 100: A Century of Community,” an exhibit featuring memorabilia from each decade of the university’s existence. The USL Wind Ensemble also will begin playing for audience members and limited, commemorative Centennial apparel, gifts and other souvenirs will be on sale at the entrance of the Cajundome. These USL 100 items, according to organizers, are limited and are only being offered for a short period of time.

Adult admission to the Spectacular is the purchase of a commemorative USL 100 logo pin. The lapel pin sells for \$5 and can be purchased at all Acadiana locations of promotional partners McDonald’s and IBERIABANK. Pins are also being sold at the Cajundome, the USL Student Union Ticket Office, the USL Alumni Center, University Bookstore and Follet’s Bookstore.

The Centennial fun will continue on Saturday at Cajun Field following the Centennial Spectacular. Activities will start with tailgating at 2 p.m. for the first home game of Louisiana’s Ragin’ Cajuns. The Ragin’ March will start at 6 p.m. followed by kickoff at 7 p.m. This will be the first home game for Coach Jerry Baldwin.

For more information about the Centennial, visit www.usl100.com/centennial.html or call 482-2000.

APPENDIX G. UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA AT LAFAYETTE ALUMNI DONATIONS

YEAR	DONATIONS	NEW GRADS	DONORS	TOTAL MEMBERS
1981	\$ 14,686		581	581
1982	\$ 54,115		2273	2273
1983	\$ 64,279		2635	2635
1984	\$ 73,903		3100	3100
1985	\$ 61,393		2667	2667
1986	\$ 80,506		3296	3296
1987	\$ 193,774		3358	3358
1988	\$ 222,136		5108	5108
1989	\$ 243,370	2172	6222	8394
1990	\$ 250,621	1991	6852	8843
1991	\$ 224,100	2360	5683	8043
1992	\$ 249,930	2425	6250	8675
1993	\$ 224,214	2001	4819	6820
1994	\$ 293,167	2185	6241	8426
1995	\$ 238,195	2076	4785	6861
1996	\$ 316,818	1994	6340	8334
1997	\$ 279,736	2012	5334	7346
1998	\$ 293,952	2098	5288	7386
1999	\$ 237,411	2160	4004	6164
2000	\$ 264,053	2260	4324	6584
2001	\$ 260,190	2265	4154	6419
2002				

highest

second

Source: Sharee L. Broussard, Director of UL Lafayette Alumni Association

VITA

Jacqueline Eiswirth Tisdell is the wife of Eric J. Tisdell and the daughter of John G. and JoAnn Eiswirth, of Baton Rouge. She has one older brother, John D. Eiswirth and one older sister, Jennifer E. deFrances. Jacqueline graduated from Centenary College in Shreveport in 2000 with a bachelor of arts degree in English. While a graduate student at Louisiana State University, she served as president of the Mass Communication Association of Graduate Students and worked as a graduate assistant for the University of Louisiana System. She completed work on her master of mass communication degree in 2002 and resides in Baton Rouge.