The Influence of Relatedness on Emotional Brand Attachment with Fitness-Oriented Non-Profits: A Self-Determination Theory Approach

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THE INFLUENCE OF RELATEDNESS ON EMOTIONAL BRAND ATTACHMENT WITH
FITNESS-ORIENTED NON-PROFITS: A SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY APPROACH

by

ALEXANDER CASTIGLIONE

Under the Direction of Carrie Freeman, Ph.D and Tillman Russell, Ph.D

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of relatedness to emotional brand attachment, specifically in the context of Self-Determination Theory. It aims to fill the extant literature regarding a mini theory of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT), which has not been examined in the communication and marketing literature. The study identifies which dimension(s) of relatedness – defined as Acceptance/Support, Connection, Common Interests, and Congruity – are predictors of Emotional Brand Attachment (EBA), specifically in the context of fitness-related non-profit organizations. By use of a survey to fitness-related non-profit supporters, this formative research endeavors to investigate a yet untested facet of emotional brand attachment in a communication and branding context. The scope of this research is not limited to merely predictors of Emotional Brand Attachment under the SDT framework, but also ventures to inform the communication literature so non-profit executives and marketers can more strategically and effectively craft messaging to foster EBA.

INDEX WORDS: Emotional Brand Attachment, Self-Determination Theory, Relationship Motivation Theory, Branding, Non-Profit Strategy, Fitness, Altruism, Cause Related Marketing, Corporate Social Responsibility
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ALEXANDER CASTIGLIONE

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May 2021
DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the many people that have formed me and helped me along this journey. In no specific order, to my late parents: my mother Sherry, for blessing me with a thirst for knowledge in all I encountered, to my father, Joseph, for giving me the grit and stamina to endure. To my sister, Stephanie, for helping me when I still had growing up to do, to my loving wife, for supporting my relentless pursuits, and for being my north star even amidst the harshest of seas, and to my daughter Camellia, who I hope to instill with a perpetually inquisitive nature.
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I’d also like to acknowledge and thank my committee for helping me thrive and focus in academia – Dr.’s Carrie Freeman, Tillman Russell, Holley Wilkin - as well as Professor Dror Walter for indoctrinating me into academia and entrusting me with research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SDT – Self-Determination Theory
CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
CRM – Cause Related Marketing
CSE – Charity Sporting Event
RMT – Relationship Motivation Theory
EBA – Emotional Brand Attachment
CSE – Charity Sporting Events
PLOC – Perceived Locus of Causality
IPLOC – Internal Perceived Locus of Causality
EPLOC – External Perceived Locus of Causality
CET – Cognitive Evaluation Theory
OIT – Organismic Interaction Theory
GCT – Goal Contents Theory
BPNT – Basic Psychological Needs Theory
COT – Causality Orientations Theory
EM – External Motivation
BESC – Brand Engagement in Self Concept
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

The inspiration for this project comes from personal experience; as the founder and executive director of a growing, nationally recognized 501(c)3 non-profit, Barbells For Bullies®, the author has a vested interest in examining the cause and modes of emotional brand attachment to non-profit organizations. Moreover, the author consults with various nonprofits in the fitness field that conduct charity sporting events (CSEs) to raise funds and awareness for their respective causes. As a non-profit founder and director, finding strategic communication tactics that resonate and are salient to our base while driving involvement are tantamount to our outreach efforts.

The goal of this project is to examine the role played by relatedness (and the dimensions thereof) under the auspices of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) on emotional brand attachment to an organization, brand, or cause. SDT is a theoretical framework in describing human motivation and “needs fulfillment” that consists of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This study is primarily concerned with the dimension of relatedness. While there is ample research into SDT – and its composite “mini-theories” that constitute the framework – there is a paucity of research on one of these mini-theories - Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT). This project aims to fill that academic gap. Moreover, while there is a significant body of research on the consumer side of brand attachment, and a burgeoning interest in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Cause Related Marketing (CRM), there is a lacuna in how non-profit charities specifically can leverage these theories and concepts to further their respective strategic communications efforts. This is of special import to non-profits of all sizes, as they rely
primarily on public support, volunteerism, connection, and the like, in addition to filling a void in the conceptual literature regarding RMT.

As a concrete example, this can be related to Barbells For Bullies’ outreach efforts. While there are tens of thousands of non-profits that concern themselves with animal advocacy in the United States (National Center for Charitable Giving Statistics, 2020), Barbells For Bullies aims to garner support from peoples who are both animal advocates and athletes/fitness-oriented. While it is necessary for a potential supporter to believe in the overarching cause, say animal welfare or pit bull-type dog awareness, it is of strategic and fiscal importance additionally for a person to be a staunch supporter of Barbells For Bullies brand and their outreach efforts. Fostering emotional brand attachment is just one of the mechanisms that can drive this outcome and allow fitness-related non-profits to potentially establish enduring, emotional bonds with supporters. This has manifold downstream benefits which will be discussed at length throughout this paper. A survey was administered to 377 participants, the supporters of various fitness-related non-profits, to explore the influence of relatedness in emotional brand attachment to the organization.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

While much formative research has been done on the many composite theories of SDT (six in total, which will be discussed at length), there is a clear gap in the research regarding one of these “mini-theories” – Relationship Management Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan et al. 2014). To the author’s knowledge, and per Gilal et al. (2019), no research has been conducted regarding this specific mini theory of SDT. This project aims to fill that gap and examine the influence that various dimensions of relatedness have on Emotional Brand Attachment. Emotional Brand Attachment has been researched extensively, as will be discussed in the
literature review, and is characterized as a deep, meaningful and at times para-social relationship with a brand. This is of specific import to non-profit organizations as a non-profit brand that establishes a connection of this magnitude will presumably create “super supporters,” or brand advocates that evangelize the brand itself, and carry out the organization’s mission and vision on their own, autonomously, and affect more change en masse.

In this paper and study, the author is bringing together the tenets of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) in fostering Emotional Brand Attachment, while specifically examining the concept of relatedness under the umbrella of Relationship Motivation Theory (which has not yet been examined in the marketing or communications literature). What’s more, this study also examines the role that charity-sporting events (CSEs), conducted by fitness-related charities, have on the concept of relatedness and its various dimensions. Overall, this study primarily draws on the current marketing, social psychology, and philanthropic literatures and aims to add meaningful research to the conversation surround RMT in these contexts.

1.2.1 Overview of SDT and Extant RMT Research

Self-Determination Theory has been researched in various capacities since the initial publication of the theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) overall maintains that humans are driven to seek out goals or outcomes that satisfy specific needs; namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Furthermore, in SDT, these three psychological needs are considered essential in both the contents of goal formation and process of goal pursuits (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Their groundbreaking study discusses various motivational theories, from intrinsic motivation (White, 1959) to drive reduction (Hull, 1943), but ultimately Deci and Ryan establish that at the core, through the lens of SDT, humans are inherently “active, growth-oriented organisms” with a natural proclivity to seek balance and integration into larger social
structures. (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For this reason, it appears to the author that the crux of this theory relies in relatedness; balance and integration into social structures requires first and foremost, relatedness, before any the other branches of SDT (competence, autonomy) can be realized. Therefore, relatedness is of special importance to this specific framework.

SDT is a leading theory in describing human motivation and variables that affect said motivation and behavior. It has been leveraged by dozens of researchers, and of late, has been shown to predict consumer motivation better than the Theory of Planned Behavior, a popular model in health and communication literature posited by Azjen (1991) regarding goal-directed behaviors (Leone, Perugini, & Ercolani, 2004; Perugini & Bagozzi, 2001). However, SDT is a very nuanced theoretical framework, comprised of six mini theories. They are cognitive evaluation theory (CET), organismic integration theory (OIT), causality orientations theory (COT), basic psychological needs theory (BPNT), goal contents theory (GCT) and relationship motivation theory (RMT). The focus of this paper is to fill the dearth of research on the latter mini-theory, RMT.

While the importance of the “cause” to potential supporters is assuredly a predictor of involvement or support, given the preponderance of hundreds if not thousands of organizations or “brands” that address causes like cancer prevention or awareness, animal advocacy, LGBTQ+ issues, etc., it’s vital for non-profit organizations to establish emotional brand attachment to their

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**Figure 1 SDT Framework**

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brand. Relationships and the concept of “relatedness” are crucial underpinnings of RMT which are necessary to foster any type of “brand relationship.”

Furthermore, this study aims to augment the communication and marketing research from a strategic communication perspective, in that identifying the role that “relatedness” plays in consumer brand attachment, particularly to non-profit organizations or “brands.” This will add meaningfully to the current body of research, and have a managerial implication of helping brands, nonprofits, and their managers refine their messaging, communication strategy, and tactics to convey “relatedness” in their messaging.

For context, the next section presents a brief overview of each theory, the research that has been conducted, and the findings thereof. It is worth noting that from a PR and strategic communication perspective, specifically for non-profit organizations, RMT appears to be a crucial framework for distinguishing characteristics that increase relationship building effectiveness with the brand.

1.2.1 SDT Mini Theories

Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) was initially developed by Deci, Connell, and Ryan (1989), and is the precursor to the robust SDT framework that was published a decade or so later. It relates primarily to intrinsic motivation and contains nuances of “autotelic” behaviors posited by Csikszentmihalyi vis a vis “autotelic” experience. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1978). Intrinsically motivated activities were essentially those that an individual would find interesting and do in the absence of any other external or extrinsic motivations. Thus, Deci (1975) proposed that these types of behaviors were satiating a psychological need to feel self-determined and competent. The further research into this theory developed and highlighted the effects cognitive evaluation
theory has specifically on social contexts and external factors such as rewards, interpersonal interactions, ego-involvement, and the like on intrinsic motivation (Gilal et al. 2019).

Necessarily, the cognitive evaluation theory view gave rise to another prominent mini theory within SDT – organismic integration theory (OIT), which addresses the question of extrinsic motivation and locus of causality (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gilal et al. 2018d). This was broken down into Internal Perceived Locus of Causality (I-PLOC), initially posited by Heider (1958), and External Perceived Locus of Causality (E-PLOC) – which was proposed by Deci & others in various earlier studies (e.g. Deci & Ryan, 1980, 2000). The perceived locus of causality (PLOC) was tied into a person’s need to feel autonomous, which suggested that context affects intrinsic motivation, but also extrinsic factors. To summarize, there are four distinct forms of this extrinsic type of motivation: (1) external regulation, in which people are motivated to avoid punishment or obtain a reward; (2) introjected regulation, in which people are motivated to demonstrate the ability to maintain self-worth or avoid feelings of shame, guilt, and other negative emotions; (3) identified regulation, where people endorse and/or value a goal that is considered to be a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gilal et al., 2018b, Gilal et al. 2019). The fourth form of extrinsic motivation is largely considered to be the most autonomous and well-integrated form – (4) integrated regulation – which allows various identifications to coalesce and create a coherent and unified sense of self (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Gilal et al., 2018b, Gilal et al. 2019). This type of integrated regulation ties in with other theories in the communication and consumer psychology literature like Self-Verification Theory (Swann, 1983) and Actual and Ideal Self Image (Sirgy, 1982; Malar et al., 2011).

The next mini theory focuses more on individual differences and overall motivational emphasis, causality orientations theory (COT). This is based on three types of behaviors or
cognitive processes: autonomy orientation, controlled orientation, and amotivation orientation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). In short, the “autonomy orientation” is typified by a well-internalized external motivation (EM); and is in accordance with one’s values, self-endorsed actions, and actual interests (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). The “controlled orientation” is characterized by acts that are more in sync with external events, pressures, or demands and is less autonomous than the previous “autonomy orientation” (Gilal et al. 2018c; Gilal et al. 2020).

Under the auspices of amotivation or impersonal orientation, the third and final aspect of COT, people tend to think of their life experiences not as self-authored or self-affected, but as outside their control. They tend to think of what has befallen them as “luck” or “fate” (Gilal et. al. 2020). People with this type of orientation tend to feel helpless, inept, with negative thoughts, self-esteem, and the like. Hung and Lu (2018) examined this and coupled it with brand attachment, in the same manner that this study does; however, they did so by utilizing a different mini theory to test (BPNT).

The next mini theory has received the most attention in the communication, marketing, and branding literature, by far, with over 33 studies conducted (Gilal et al. 2019). Basic psychological needs theory (BPNT) postulates that psychological well-being and optimal functioning are grounded on three universal needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). In the literature, autonomy refers primarily to personal volition, psychological freedom, and the ability to affect one’s own life (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2002; Gilal et. al 2018c). The need for competence is tied to the feeling or experience of effectiveness in one’s undertakings, pursuits, choices, or life (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Relatedness refers to belonging and a desire to feel connected with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci & Ryan, 2014). The latter is crucial to RMT.
Goal Contents Theory (GCT) is rooted in the differences between intrinsic and extrinsic goals, essentially taking up where cognitive evaluation theory left off and further refining the research into motivation and goals. However, this is not as concerned with the primary locus of causality but more concerned with concrete life goals – such as personal growth, the need for close relationships, community, efficacy, health – and distinguishing these intrinsically motivated goals from extrinsically motivated, i.e., material goals, such as cars, money, or fame. It has been suggested that intrinsic goals satisfy the primary needs of SDT (autonomy, competence, relatedness) whereas extrinsic goals do not (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gilal et al., 2019).

What remains of these mini theories is the sixth and final, and the locus of this paper, relationship management theory (RMT). This mini theory concerns itself with relatedness, and the development of close personal relationships. While the psychological literature (Palmatier et al., 2008) is concerned mainly with the romantic partners and close personal friends, no research has been done comparing this theory with another form of relationship that has been examined exhaustively in the communications literature – emotional brand attachment (Chang & Tung, 2016; Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Hung & Lu, 2018; Japutra et al., 2014; Proksch et al., 2015; Razmus et al., 2017; Thomson, 2006).

RMT posits that some level of close relationship is not just desirable, but necessary and essential for optimal well-being because relationships, at their core, satisfy the basic human need for relatedness. In fact, SDT argues that “relatedness is essential for human wellness” and “people require relatedness to be vital and to thrive” (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p. 54). For this reason, relatedness is the bedrock upon which all other needs and thus motivations are built upon.

However, this perspective (RMT) has not been studied, especially from a communications perspective. This study aims to fill that gap.
1.2.2 Current Research on SDT Mini Theories

SDT as a theoretical framework is not just of interest to social-psychologists, psychologists, and cognitive scientists. It has been garnering increasing attention from marketing, communication, advertising, and consumer decision making scholars steadily over the last twenty years. Gilal et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis looking at a) the total volume of marketing/communication related studies that employed SDT in some capacity and b) the mini theories that were examined in that study. They found that the number of mini-theories utilized has increased every year since 2010, and the majority of the focus of SDT has been in the United Stated (15 studies), but also in Australia (10) Taiwan (5), France (4), and Pakistan (3). A total of 49 studies have been published in English about SDT in a marketing/communication context, with 48 of them being empirical articles. As Gilal et al. (2019) notes, RMT has been ignored in the marketing research.

Conversely, the BPNT mini theory has received a robust amount of attention, with over 20 studies being conducted in the last 20 years using this mini theory as the framework.
As has been demonstrated in the over 40 studies on SDT in the last 20 years in a marketing or communications context, the marketing outcomes are positive for brands and organizations, in terms of: purchase intention, brand preference, customer retention, word of mouth, product adoption, brand love, brand loyalty, and of course, brand attachment (Gilal et al., 2019).

*Figure 4 From Gilal et. al 2019, p. 11. Conceptual SDT Mini Theory Framework*
Where this study also will contribute to the academic research is examining relatedness, and the dimensions thereof, as a predictor of emotional brand attachment. Research has shown that brand supporters and brand advocates form parasocial bonds with a brand – in this case the nonprofit organization – and other research (addressed in later sections) shows that individuals will carry out that brand’s mission and vision on their own, autonomously and independent from the organization itself, and affect more change on a larger social scale (Chang & Tung, 2016; Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Hung & Lu, 2018; Japutra et al., 2014; Proksch et al., 2015; Malar et al. 2011; Razmus et al., 2017; Thomson, 2006). This type of engagement is of exceptional value to non-profit organizations and all internal stakeholders (Filo et al., 2018).

What is more, finding an activity that is interesting, important to oneself, influenced by prior experiences of need satisfaction, and is set towards a growth-oriented activity are key undercurrents within the SDT framework (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this way, SDT and EBA elegantly tie into one another specifically regarding fitness-related non-profits. To be explicit – persons that engage in fitness would very likely be oriented towards a growth-mindset, enjoy the sport/process, and have positive attitudinal orientations toward the activity (Higgins & Lauzon, 2002; Ogles & Masters, 2003; Taylor & Shanka; 2008). Given this, and the underpinnings of the Emotional Brand Attachment research like motivations associated with brands (Hui, Molden & Finkel, 2013), brand connection/brand passion (Malar et al., 2011; Park et al., 2010), brand affection (Thomson et al., 2006), and brand community (Razmus et. al 2017; Snyder & Newman, 2019), there is a clear precedent for conceptual linkage and interactions between the SDT and EBA Frameworks.
1.3 Interest:

1.3.1 Role of non-profits in today’s scale

Over 1.5 million nonprofit organizations (NPO) exist in the US alone, and from 2006-2016, there has been an increase in NPO registrations by 4.5% (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020). Additionally, nonprofits garner trillions of dollars in revenue, with 2016 (the most recent year) reporting revenues of $2.6 trillion and contributed $1.047 trillion to the US economy (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020). With this many options in the “marketplace” consumers have a vast number of choices in which causes and ultimately “brands” to support. Because of this, non-profits are in a sense competing like commercial companies for “sales” and “consumers” – although those sales are in fact “donations,” and those consumers are non-profit “supporters.” The average American household donates roughly $2,500 per year to charity, high net-worth donors (i.e., wealthy) donated nearly $29,000 in 2017 (Charitable Giving Statistics, 2020). Altruism and attention are in a sense a commodity, as well. In a competitive landscape where many nonprofits may aim to address a specific cause or social good (i.e., cancer prevention, animal rescue, etc.), they also must maintain a dedicated and loyal support base so as to carry on their mission, have a steady stream of financial income and volunteer support, and maintain operations. This is especially important to smaller, volunteer driven non-profits with little to no paid staff but is of use to large, multi-national “brands” as well. Considering this, volunteer support (i.e., human capital), is just as important as monetary capital. An estimated 25% of US adults volunteered in 2017, totaling roughly 8.8 billion hours, valued at roughly $200 billion. Roughly 37% of the US adult population volunteers their time and energy, not to mention talents and expertise, to make a difference (Charitable Giving
Statistics, 2020; National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020). Over the last two decades, these aggregate volunteer numbers have been relatively stable (See Table 1 in Appendix). Nonprofits have a potential volunteer pool of millions of people, and finding ways to engage, motivate, and retain volunteers – and donors -- is of supreme importance to the organizations for long term and short-term health and operational efficiency (Bennett et al., 2007; Filo et al., 2020; Goodwin et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2010). This study aims to investigate the predictive effect that relatedness may exert which causes people to become emotionally attached to a brand, thus creating a super-supporter who is more engaged, willing to spread the word, volunteer their time and donate money to support the respective cause.

It is worth noting that the current study is investigating attachment to an organization or *brand* and not to a *cause*. Since there are hundreds if not thousands of organizations that address each social issue, it’s imperative to note that the interest lies in understanding the influence of “relatedness” on emotional *brand* attachment, and not support of a cause. For example, there are over 38,000 organizations that are “health-related” nonprofits, which can be subset into cancer prevention, obesity awareness, diabetes, etc. (National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020). With this many organizations that are likely doing similar work, it’s important for nonprofits and their staff to be able to develop strategic marketing and communication practices that keep their base engaged in their cause, of course, but also to create ardent supporters of their organization/brand.

### 1.3.2 Charitable Causes Leveraging Fitness

This section is meant to provide some context on the operations that fitness-related nonprofits conduct, as many of the organizations in the sample conduct Charity Sporting Events (CSEs) to raise money and awareness. There is a distinction to make between the research which
will be discussed in this section and how it relates to the current organizations in this study. Barbells For Bullies, for example, does not conduct CSEs as a means of raising funds like a Walk-A-Thon or 10K run would. Barbells For Bullies, and similar organizations in this study’s sample like VETWOD, OUT Athletics (formerly OUTWOD) and the like, utilize fitness and CSEs as the primary vehicle for raising funds and awareness, and do not conduct many events outside of the sporting/fitness realm. While some organizations may also use fitness to raise money, a fit, active, pro-social lifestyle is part of the brand identity of the organizations in the sample. However, the CSE literature is worth mentioning for several reasons.

The concept of utilizing fitness to raise money and awareness is not new. In fact, charitable sporting events have been studied quite a bit, especially of late. The locus of the research, however, has been on participation and driving factors (Bennett et. al., 2007) and the general characteristics and profile of CSE participants (Wood et al., 2010). Overall, the finding of these two studies were that participants in CSEs were motivated by a combination of factors: philanthropic (i.e., supporting a charity), social and personal enhancement (i.e., self-esteem, prestige), and athletic (i.e., challenging oneself or goal setting and overcoming).

Relatedness has been studied in a tangential manner but not in the same way that the current study proposes. Woolf, Heere and Walker (2013) explored the notion that sporting events can serve as both mechanisms for increased awareness and a financial boost, but they can also serve as a “brandfest” which can lead to stronger attachments to that charity (or brand). Their study however is different from the current proposed study in that it was more concerned with identification with the charity, not the multiple facets of relatedness – one of which is admittedly identification/connection. This distinction is also important as connection is just one of the many facets of relatedness; and common interests and congruence are also important factors of
relatedness. In the current study, the author is not just investigating the interpersonal relationships that people form because of a brand (although that is part of it), but also examining the influence of various dimensions of relatedness on emotional brand attachment to the organization or brand. Filo et al. (2013) examined the outcomes of CSEs as framed by the concept Gemeinschaft, or the social relations between individuals based on close personal ties. This framing, in the author’s opinion, was astute and salient, as charity supporters, specifically ones that are willing to donate their time, money, and sweat to a cause, are surely linked by the multi-faceted concept of relatedness on an interpersonal and personal level.

Moreover, it has been found that aside from the physical participation and benefits associated with physical activity (e.g., mood lift from endorphins, physical health improvement), there is also an added psychological benefit (Webber, 2004). From a motivational perspective, often there are multiple motives for participation which, again, are philanthropic or altruistic (supporting the charity), socially-driven, a business obligation, of the chance to leverage fitness for a cause (Filo et al., 2010, 2020; Goodwin et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2010). The current study is concerned with the role that relatedness plays on involvement and brand attachment with charities that leverage fitness for a cause, under the umbrella of the SDT framework.

Much of the charity sporting event literature refers to Wiepking and Bekkers (2011) and the eight mechanisms that drive charitable giving as a framework. They discovered that the following mechanisms drive charitable giving: need, solicitation, costs/benefits, altruism, donor’s reputation, psychological costs and benefits, values, and efficacy. Regarding fitness-oriented nonprofits, it’s worth noting that many of these mechanisms are leveraged or utilized. Need and solicitation are both engaged by the actors/participants, in that the participants in many cases explain the need for the cause to justify their involvement – usually by way of personal
connection or involvement, and also solicit donations on behalf of the organization(s). Moreover, there needs to be a sense of altruism, or at the very least an alignment of personal values in order for a charity sporting event participant to be motivated to take action in the first place. Regarding psychological costs and benefits, Wiepking and Bekkers (2011) explain these benefits as the “joy of giving” but can also be seen to augment one’s own self-image.

However, Webber’s (2004) research on charitable motives yielded slightly different results: philanthropic; the donor/participant believes in the cause, purely private; more superficial motives for donating such as an exclusive party or dinner with a celebrity, prestige; a form of social signaling indicating wealth or social status, leadership – to encourage others to give, relationship with the charity; the donor or participant has a direct connection with the charity i.e. losing a loved one to a disease, “warm glow” (much like Weipking and Bekkers’ “joy of giving”); personal enjoyment from giving to or participating in charity events, associated warm glow; supporting friends or colleagues that are part of the event, and peer pressure; friends and charity members encouraging attendance or involvement.

Regarding charity sporting events, all of these “motives” outlined by Weipking & Bekkers (2011) and Webber (2004) are salient. The table is listed below which delineates examples of how fitness-related non-profits can or do embody the previously mentioned charitable giving mechanisms.

Table 1 Mechanisms of Charitable Giving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism (Authors)</th>
<th>Example for Fitness Related NPO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Awareness of a need, e.g., noticing homelessness affecting their community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitation (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Asking or being asked to donate – usually money but sometimes time/effort e.g., asking for a peer-to-peer fundraising donation from friends on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs/Benefits (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Relationship of the cost of donating relative to the benefits that sum incurs or difference instantiated e.g., for every $X, Y people can be helped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altruism (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Caring for a cause; animal rights or cancer prevention, for example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reputation (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>People that give to charity are held in higher esteem i.e., personal reputation; but also, the reputation of the organization is a factor e.g. this donation will be utilized properly to achieve the mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prestige (Webber)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Costs &amp; Benefits (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Contributing to a personal self-image, e.g., “because I support charity X, I am a selfless, socially responsible person.” – the “joy of giving.” This causes positive mood, alleviates feelings of guilt, and satisfies desire to show gratitude, among other things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm Glow (Webber)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Endorsing the prosocial values or mission that the non-profit exudes, e.g. LGBTQ+ rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy (Wiepking &amp; Bekkers)</td>
<td>Perception that donations make a tangible difference e.g., with my donation and entry fee, the organization was able to help X amount of animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropic (Webber)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purely Private (Webber)</td>
<td>Raising a certain amount of money earns them prizes or gives them access to a high-profile athlete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (Webber)</td>
<td>Inspiring others to take action and leverage something they like (fitness, in this context) to make a difference through their own interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to the Charity (Webber)</td>
<td>Personal connection with the founders or direct experience with the cause e.g., they have been affected by veteran suicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associated Warm Glow (Webber)</td>
<td>Supporting a friend’s or colleague’s involvement, e.g., donating to a friend’s peer-to-peer fundraiser or signing up for a competition with them to show solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Pressure</td>
<td>Being encouraged by friends to support the charity’s event e.g., signing up to compete with a friend or join a fundraising team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Implications & Significance:

As referenced, this project aims to fill a gap in the SDT literature, specifically by examining the Relationship Motivation Theory (RMT) “mini-theory” that is a part of the SDT framework. No research has been conducting examining the role of RMT in a marketing or communications context, despite the authors of Self-Determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (2014), specifically calling for more research into this aspect of SDT. While many studies have been conducted in the marketing and communications literature on the other 5 composite mini theories (cognitive evaluation theory, causality orientations theory, organismic interaction theory, basic psychological needs theory, and goal contents theory); at least 49 studies in the last two decades (Gilal et al., 2019), none have been conducted to examine RMT, as previously stated. Moreover, by examining RMT and the role of relatedness and community on emotional brand attachment, non-profits can garner insights on how to strategically communicate with their supporters, with the goal of creating more “super supporters” or highly active supporters that evangelize their organization and its mission. Research exists regarding brand practices, CSE participation (Rupp et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2010), mechanisms that drive donations (Filo et al. 2020) and volunteer engagement (Hyde et al., 2016), but nothing to the author’s knowledge regarding predictors of emotional brand attachment specifically to an organization or cause.

The emotional brand attachment literature is robust and, like SDT, has garnered a significant amount of attention in the last two decades. This research aims to serve as an exploratory study into the role of relatedness on emotional brand attachment under the auspices of SDT, specifically a mini-theory – Relationship Motivation Theory – which has been largely overlooked until now.
1.5 Context, Uses and Marketing/Branding Implications

Given that the world has “flattened” with the rise of social media, and fundraising drives, advocacy campaigns, and other social movements can exist online and generate tremendous traction with minimal capital investment (Filo et al., 2018; Saxton & Wang, 2014), the uses of the current study in how to strengthen and maintain emotional brand attachment are far reaching. Perhaps more saliently, pandemics such as the COVID-19 global health crisis can affect the fundraising potential of all nonprofits, but especially fitness related ones as in-person events were cancelled or postponed for much of 2020. This gives rise to the efficacy and utility of peer-to-peer fundraising. Many of the organizations in the sample (Barbells For Boobs, Barbells For Bullies, OUT Athletics, Tap Cancer Out, VETWOD) of the current study employ peer-to-peer fundraising as a mechanism to raise funds, awareness, and support, and have done so before and during the global pandemic.

Peer-to-peer fundraising (P2P) is a type of crowdfunding in which charity supporters can create a “fundraising page” and share with their social networks to garner more donations, first and foremost, but also more awareness and “social contagion” (Iyengar et al., 2011). This hearkens to theories like the Strength of Weak Ties (Granovetter, 1983) and social contagion via Diffusions on Innovation theory (Iyengar et al., 2011), which in themselves have a large body of research and literature. Research has demonstrated that these are strong mechanisms to raise money from family and friends in one’s network, and also can extend into casual friends that are interested in that same athletic activity – for the current study that would be CrossFit, barbell sports, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and functional fitness (Chapman et al., 2019; Filo et al., 2018; Saxton & Wang, 2014). Chapman et. al. (2019) has also explicitly called for more research into the P2P arena, as it is garnering more and more traction and popularity, and the ease of use for such
platforms as Facebook Causes are making the barriers to entry far easier to overcome. In fact, many fundraisers can be set up with a few clicks, and shared with your entire social network with a few more.

Given that there is an ample body of research on the importance of CSEs for generating revenue for nonprofits, the efficacy of peer-to-peer fundraising to extend that revenue model, and just as importantly, the increased contact of potential supporters via social networks, more research must be done looking at the mechanisms that affect emotional brand attachment in a communications and marketing setting. By examining emotional brand attachment mechanisms that can be leveraged specifically for non-profits, investigating the effect of relatedness under the auspices of SDT, researching the role of cause-related marketing in a non-commercial context, and ascertaining the efficacy of certain mechanisms that drive this type of connection, non-profit executives can extend their scale and activate more people, for less time and financial cost. In doing so, they can also activate their base and motivate them to act on the organization’s behalf, engaging their own social network, increasing their reach geometrically. Given this, involvement is the crucial metric: involvement in events, but also involvement with the organization by reposting/sharing content, purchasing merchandise, and raising money on the behalf of the organization.
2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This chapter provides further discussion and theoretical overview on (1) the cause related and corporate social responsibility marketing literature (2) emotional brand attachment (3) the extant research in SDT and some of the key theoretical drivers of conducting further research into RMT and (4) the research questions for this study.

2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility and Cause Related Marketing

The prevailing notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has increasingly prompted brands and corporations to donate a portion of profits, capital, or “screen time” to various nonprofit organizations or social causes; it’s been a major trend for corporations to donate capital to organization “x” every time a product is purchased (Chang, 2008). Cause related marketing is tied to CSR, for a variety of reasons. Primarily, cause related marketing (CRM) is expected to serve the dual role of improving the company’s performances via profits while simultaneously supporting a social cause (Robinson et al., 2012). For example, companies have become more eco-conscious by leveraging cleaner manufacturing practices and green promotion i.e. zero-waste facilities or 100% post-consumer packaging (D’Souza & Taghian, 2005), which has the downstream benefits of increasing brand image and ideally revenue. However, many of these scholars have illustrated the pitfalls of cause-related marketing from a for-profit context. For example, guilt appeals in green advertising have been noted to work in certain cases, but only as attention grabbers (Chang, 2012). Moreover, the CSR/CRM dichotomy has been researched by others to show that it’s useful in terms of boosting the image of the sponsoring corporation (Berger, Cunningham, & Kozinets, 1999; Bronn & Vrioni, 2001) or boosting short term sales (Strahilevitz, 1999; Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). As consumers become savvier, however, there needs to be a congruence, a *brand-cause fit*. Consumers need to believe that the companies are in
fact authentically engaged with the cause and, socially responsible (Nan & Heo, 2008). As many studies have noted, there needs to be a brand-cause fit, otherwise the cause-related marketing is doomed to failure (Aaker & Keller, 1990; Rifon et al. 2004); the research has shown that the motives must match the fit. An example of good brand-cause fit would be Subaru and their zero-waste initiative. Subaru has long been known as the eco-conscious, outdoorsy-type’s vehicle, and a CRM campaign dedicated to “green” initiatives makes sense as a brand-cause fit. There is an internal consistency and congruity between the brand’s identity and the cause that is being supported. McDonalds, by contrast, combating obesity in a CRM campaign would not seem like a good “brand cause fit” given their product and brand’s impact on global health. There has also been inquiry into product-cause fit, and the congruence needs to be there as well (Guerreiro, Rita, & Trigueiros 2016).

However, this paradigm has been circumvented with the rise of nonprofit organizations whose entire brand – their brand attitude, brand personality, brand image, and brand affect (Aaker, 1991) – are all based on philanthropic or charitable efforts. In essence, these brands have built brand equity surrounding how engaged they are with a specific non-profit cause. This is worth highlighting, as organizations can take the best practices learned from the cause-related marketing and corporate social responsibility research and leverage it for their gain. Many corporations have utilized CRM to build a relationship with the consumer, and nonprofits can do the same (Kureshi & Thomas, 2020). One key takeaway from commercial endeavors is that nonprofit directors and managers can utilize it the donation message framing research when it comes to merchandising donation-to-impact messaging (Pracejus, Olsen, & Brown 2003; Kleber, Florack, & Chladek 2016).
The subtext of much of the CRM and CSR research is that of transparency and communicating impact. Clearly, the organization must support causes that fit the brand e.g. cancer prevention organizations support cancer screening and prevention initiatives. In this sense, this study examines the “fit” between brand and cause, and how these relate to one another. This section serves to illustrate the pitfalls of any co-branding with a charitable endeavor and overview the research that has already been done in this sector

2.2 Emotional Brand Attachment

One of the key theoretical frameworks that needs to be discussed in more detail is that of emotional brand attachment (EBA). Before we delve into emotional brand attachment, we must briefly discuss brands, and what constitutes a brand. Many scholars have asserted that brands, like people, have their own identities and personalities (Plummer 1985; Keller 1993; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993). Aaker (p. 348, 1997) stated that brand personality is “the set of human characteristics associated with a brand.” Brand personality traits can be formed by consumer interaction, direct or indirect, with the brand itself (Plummer, 1985). Brands have a personality or identity, and consumers can connect with that brand based on their own self-concept. (Choi & Rifon, 2012; Helm et al., 2016; Razmus et al., 2017; Hung & Lu, 2018; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Malar et al., 2011;) A self-concept is how one views oneself, and can be varied across several metrics, but is most expressed as “actual self” and “ideal self” (Sirgy, 1982).

Because brands have personalities, identities and other components that give them properties that make them whole, rounded characters in our lives, we can form parasocial relationships with them. (For context, a parasocial relationship is a one-sided relationship that is formed with limited interaction, in this case a brand.) Communication and marketing scholars
and researchers leveraged the findings of Attachment Theory by Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970; Ainsworth et al. 1978) which examined the social bond between children and their parents. Communication and marketing scholars utilized this theory to explain the “brand attachment” (Ahn & Back, 2019; Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Malär et al., 2011; Thomson et al., 2005; Morhart et al., 2015; Proksch et al., 2015; Thomson, 2006). Because of these deep, meaningful, almost familial relationships consumers form with brands, researchers began examining this territory and developing different psychometric scales and nuances to the EBA model.

Fournier (1998) examined the validity and fleshed out the theory underpinning emotional brand attachment, picking up on the work of D. Aaker (1990, 1991), J. Aaker (1997), Plummer (1985), and Klein et al. (1993). These theories have been developed in a variety of ways since Fournier solidified the field. She posited that feelings of attachment and love lay “at the core of all strong brand relationships” (Fournier, 1998, p.363). This will be a crucial linkage between RMT and EBA for purposes of this study.

Much of the studies about EBA reference the self-concept literature (Sirgy, 1982). Many commercial and advertising campaigns are one of two types – practical or aspirational. Practical advertisements or products typically rely on a common chore that would be made easier by product “x” or a daily problem that can be alleviated by product “y”. This would be the “actual self” (Sirgy, 1982). Conversely, a vast amount of marketing is aspirational – i.e. Product A will make you better at “B,” and these appeals are playing off the “ideal self.” A considerable amount of research has been done to examine the interplay with these nuances (Bidmon et al., 2017, Hung & Lu, 2018; Helm et al. 2016; Malar et al. 2011). Typically, these studies rely on some metric of congruity – between the brand and the self (Thomson et. al 2005; Malar et. al 2011)
which leverages congruity theory. Park et al. (2010) has been cited consistently, as it provides a
cross-dimensionalization of brand attachment that was needed – self-connection and prominence. Self-
connection is akin to a parasocial bond with a brand, which involved a cognitive and emotional
connection with a brand. Brand prominence refers to the extent to which positive memories or
feelings are associated with the brand and are top of mind. Many thinkers have used brand
connection and brand prominence as a launching pad to further explain the EBA mechanisms.
Research was also done to develop measures of emotional brand attachment (Thomson,
MacInnis, & Park, 2005; Bidmon et al. 2017).

Given the breadth and depth of the emotional brand attachment research, we will focus
on some key studies of late. Thomson (2006) studied attachment to human brands and used SDT
to help explain the results in his theoretical model. Furthermore, it is also crucial to establish the
distinction between other brand related constructs – like brand attitude or brand loyalty – from
brand attachment. Although they may be highly correlated, they are conceptually distinct, and
differ in terms of affective mechanisms, like self-connection and passion (Fournier, 1998;
Thomson et al. 2005; Park et. al 2010). Moreover there have been studies looking at the
importance of celebrity and product/cause congruence (Choi & Rifon, 2012).

Japutra et al. (2014) extended the EBA research to look at the boundaries of this
interaction and went so far as to examine the predictors and outcomes of emotional brand
attachment. This paper was striking for several reasons. By utilizing a thematic analysis method,
the authors established a conceptual model of the antecedents and outcomes of brand attachment.
Self-congruity, experience, responsiveness, quality, and reputation were all found to be
predictors. Brand attachment was typified by emotions, self-connection, and importance. The
outcomes, consistent with other findings in the EBA and even some similar outcomes in the CSE
literature (Filo et al., 2010; Taylor & Shanka, 2008; Woolf et al., 2013) were intention to recommend/repurchase/revisit (i.e. a repeat customer), resilience to negative information (i.e. resistance to bad press or reviews), and defensive acts (i.e. defending the brand). Many of these findings will be used in the survey for this study to operationalize different variables.

Furthermore, EBA and SDT have been linked in more studies other than what have already been referenced. Helm et al. (2016) examined self-concept, brand identification and its influence on brand citizenship behaviors. Part of their method will also be leveraged for use in this study. Whereas they used social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner, 1978) to explain their findings and as their theoretical framework, many of the underlying mechanisms were strikingly like what SDT and EBA studies have found. Namely, they found brand identification, congruity, and brand pride to all be important markers of brand attachment and utilized an actual-self/ideal-self framework, extremely similar to Malar et al (2011).

Finally, Hung and Lu (2018) utilized both SDT paradigms in their EBA research – although in this case they were more interested in motivational factors (cognitive evaluation theory or causality orientations theory in SDT) and examining motivations rather than attachment mechanisms. However, their finding reified the importance of emotional brand attachment as a managerial tool and underscored the importance of EBA. Their research added to the conversation by providing a more nuanced approach – hence the Rosy side vs Blue side of Brand Attachment in the article’s title – as well as identifying key variables in the messaging and message receiver. Hung and Lu (2018) examined the positive outcomes associated with EBA – such as brand affection, connection, and passion – as well as the less often researched negative (i.e., blue side) of EBA – such as separation anxiety, anticipated regret, missing, and sadness. Razmus et al., (2017) added to the EBA research by examining a lacuna left by Malar et al.
(2011) and Park et al. (2010). However, they did so with a goal contents theory (GCT) approach – looking at the importance of extrinsic vs intrinsic motivation. Their results provided a bit more fidelity on the nuances of motivations with regard to SDT but did not address the RMT question at hand. Specifically, they found that people with values that are extrinsically motivated are more likely to include brands in their self-concept whereas people that are intrinsically motivated are less likely; and included a new measure: brand engagement in self-concept (BESC).

### 2.2.1 Brand Communities

Since some of the CSE literature references brand communities, it is worth noting their affects and the research that has been done on them thus far. One of the ideas of marketing to subcultures or subsets communities – especially salient for fitness-orient nonprofits since there are countless “fitness communities” – is that of brand communities (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995). As Muniz and O’Guinn (p. 412, 2001) defined it, a brand community is a “specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand.” There is a plethora of research that has been done on brand communities, ranging from a vast array of consumer products to musical groups to sports teams (Woolf et al. 2013). Research has also been done on the brand community phenomenon itself, such as building brand community (McAlexander et al., 2002; Woolf et al., 2013), and using brand communities to reduce loneliness or augment the self-concept (Razmus et al., 2017; Snyder & Newman, 2019).

This is worth noting since the sample populations from this particular study could be viewed as inhabitants of distinct brand communities – both as CrossFitters and as animal advocates in the case of Barbells for Bullies, for example.
2.3 Relationship Motivation Theory under SDT

The final aspect of the current study relies on the mini theory, relationship motivation theory (RMT). As referenced previously, while SDT has garnered a vast amount of academic attention in the marketing and communication field with 49 total studies, none have been conducting examining RMT. As it happens, Deci and Ryan (2014) in a paper specifically about RMT reference the work on attachment by Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1978), establishing a clear linkage between RMT and emotional brand attachment (EBA). EBA, as you may recall, has its genesis in their work on attachment styles and was leveraged by communication scholars to explain brand attachment. SDT hazards that “relatedness is an evolved psychological need in its own right, which, although associated with adaptive advantages, takes on an intrinsic character in human nature” (Deci & Ryan, 2014, p.53). The concept of a need, however, is distinct from that of a motivation, the authors note. This is a crucial distinction. So much of the research that has been conducted on SDT, charity sporting events (CSE) and EBA has been looking at motivation satisfaction, but not need satisfaction. To further explain the last point, much of the research to date has been done to examine motivations and how these motivations are realized and satisfied, whereas the current study questions the “need” for relatedness and how it related to EBA from a SDT perspective.

Furthermore, SDT argues that relatedness is essential to human wellness (Deci & Ryan, 2014) and that a cascade of benefits arise from relatedness, which has been defined as having various facets. Acceptance and interpersonal support (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Reis et al., 2010), connection (Palmatier et al., 2008, Reis et al. 2010), common interests (Lin, 2016; Reis et al., 2010), and congruity (Lavigne, Vallerand, & Crevier-Braud, 2011; Malar et al. 2011;) are all dimensions of relatedness. This is important, as Deci and Ryan (2014) and Ryan et al. (2010)
argued that relatedness may supersede the other needs of autonomy and competence, given that we are in fact a social species, but especially when it came to flourishing relationships. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan (2000) noted that human relatedness was “not an emergent trait, but was instead an element of a deep structure that became increasing elaborated and refined under selective pressure” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 253). The previous statement is an era of evolutionary adaptation perspective (EEA) and is vital to the understanding of relatedness as it shows that we humans have a tendency toward “reciprocal altruism.” From an evolutionary biology perspective, reciprocal altruism refers to a person acting in a manner that momentarily makes a sacrifice for the benefit of another person; in a sense this is a banking of social capital. This desire to “cohere with one’s group” and seek out caring, connection support, and internalize group needs and values in order to coordinate with others in the group is not only crucial to understanding the concept of reciprocal altruism, but crucial to us as humans, according to Deci and Ryan (2000, p.253). What’s more striking is that this need for relatedness extends beyond humans. Research by Harlow and Zimmerman (1958) showed that even in nonhuman animals like rhesus monkeys, close personal contact was essential for healthy development. Furthermore, Deci and Ryan (2000, 2014) specifically address the concept of attachment and attachment styles espoused by Ainsworth et al. (1978) bringing this area of inquiry full circle.

2.4 Research Questions

Given that there is a lacuna within the SDT research regarding an entire mini theory (RMT), this study aims to fill that gap. Moreover, SDT and EBA tie into one other in ways previously referenced: persons that engage in fitness would very likely be oriented towards a growth-mindset, enjoy the sport/process, and have positive attitudinal orientations toward the activity (Higgins & Lauzon, 2002; Ogles & Masters, 2003; Taylor & Shanka, 2008). Given this
inclination toward a goal-directed mindset, and the underpinnings of the emotional brand attachment research like autonomous motivations associated with brands (Hui, Molden & Finkel, 2013), brand connection/brand passion (Malar et al., 2011; Park et al. 2010), brand affection (Thomson et al., 2006), and brand community (Razmus et. al 2017; Snyder & Newman, 2019), persons that are involved with fitness-related non-profits may be more likely to be influenced by messaging with a SDT oriented approach and emphasis on relatedness.

RQ1: What is the influence of relatedness on emotional brand attachment for fitness related non-profits?

RQ2: Are specific dimensions of relatedness more influential than others in fostering emotional brand attachment? If so, which ones?

IV: Relatedness: the dimensions of relatedness are as follows:

A) Acceptance/Support (Reis et al. 2010, Deci & Ryan, 2014)

B) Connection (Reis et al. 2010, Lavigne, Vallerand, & Crevier-Braud, 2011, Deci & Ryan, 2014)

C) Common Interests (Reis et al. 2010, Lin, 2016)

D) Congruity (Malar et al. 2011, Lavigne, Vallerand, & Crevier-Braud, 2011)
3 METHOD

A survey was selected as the primary method of data collection and analysis for several reasons. One of the main goals of this study is to understand the role that relatedness, and its various dimensions, plays in emotional brand attachment, and not the messaging specifically. Given that this research is exploratory in nature, a larger data set that could be easily coded would be required and for this reason, other qualitative methods like interviews or message/content analysis were not employed. Furthermore, understanding potential nuances and differences in the importance of “relatedness” in fostering emotional brand attachment within demographics (like age or gender) allow the organizations involved to tailor their messaging and target specific demographics in their digital marketing. In this regard, and in this study, the author is not as concerned with messaging as about the audience themselves, and what role different dimensions of relatedness play in emotional brand attachment. Put more simply, if an organization understands the audience and the role relatedness plays regarding their audience’s emotional brand attachment, then they can refine their communication to target that audience more effectively.

A brief (~10 min) multiple choice survey (shown in the appendix) was sent out to the email subscriber lists of various fitness related non-profits. It asked basic demographic questions - age, income, race/ethnicity, all of which will serve as covariates - and contained a self-report to ascertain level of involvement (events participated in, money raised, etc).

Several organizations’ Executive Directors agreed to be involved and to send the survey out to their supporters. The author contacted the following organizations and their executive
directors to gain their support of this project. For context, a brief overview of what they do has been added.

   **Barbells For Boobs** – This organization hosts primarily peer-to-peer fundraising drives to raise money and awareness for breast cancer, usually in the month of October only.

   **Barbells For Bullies** – The author of this study is the founder and executive director of this organization. They host CrossFit, powerlifting, strongman, Olympic weightlifting, and other outside the box fitness events to raise money and awareness for local animal rescues, with an emphasis on helping “pit bull” type dogs.

   **OUT Athletics** – Formerly OUTWOD, this organization hosts community workouts, peer-to-peer fundraisers, and online fitness events to raise money and awareness for The OUT Foundation, an affiliated foundation that provides scholarships to LGBTQ+ people.

   **Tap Cancer Out** – This organization is a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) based organization that utilizes both peer-to-peer fundraising and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu competitions to raise funds and awareness for various types of cancer.

   **VETWOD** – This organization hosts online fitness competitions, primarily CrossFit-style competitions, to raise money and awareness for veteran’s issues, including veteran suicide prevention.

   Emails were sent out to each organization’s email list with a recruitment script, which can be found in the appendix, in late February and early March 2021.
Each participating organization sent out an email with a link to the survey, accessible by either desktop or mobile. Most organizations sent it to their entire mailing list, and no email addresses were collected by the author to maintain data security of their subscribers. Essential demographic information like gender, income, ethnicity, and age was be obtained for a baseline and to have on hand for possible covariate analysis to see how these variables affected the DV (emotional brand attachment) and the IV (relatedness and the various dimensions thereof). No names were collected. The data collected was completely anonymous with no names, emails, or other identifiable characteristics being obtained and stored, only IP addresses to make certain there were no persons taking the survey multiple times. A setting in Qualtrics was also enabled to prevent “ballot stuffing” as an additional measure.

3.1.1 Statistical Power

Given that this research is exploratory in nature and the of the effect sizes associated with this predictive relationship between relatedness as a construct and emotional brand attachment is unknown, G*Power was used to determine a sufficient sample size to detect a typically small (.02), medium (.15) and large (.35) effect at an alpha level of .06 and with a power level of .8. It was calculated that to detect a small effect we would require a sample of 602 participants, to detect a medium effect 85 participants would be needed and detecting a large effect would require 35 participants. Therefore, the aim as to collect responses from 600 participants to have the most precise information possible. In this study, we were only able to obtain 377 full responses, which is not quite the sample pool needed to detect a small (.02) effect but still enough to make some significant observations.
3.2 Sampling

Each participating organization had agreed to send out an email with a link to the survey, accessible by either desktop or mobile. They agreed to send it to their mailing list of active subscribers, and no email addresses will be collected by the author to maintain data security of their supporters. Basic demographic information like age, gender, income, race/ethnicity, and marital status was obtained to examine any possible covariates between the DV (emotional brand attachment) and the IV (relatedness and the various dimensions thereof). The data collected was completely anonymous with no names, emails, or other identifiable characteristics being obtained. The survey was sent to thousands of supporters (see Table 2 below), with a “nudge” email following one week later, reminding the recipients to take the survey and that it could help the organization that sent it to which they are a subscriber, and likely, a supporter.

In total, 14,403 emails were sent out to subscribers across the four participating organizations – Barbells For Bullies, Barbells For Boobs, OUT Athletics, and VETWOD (Tap Cancer Out opted out of participating after initially agreeing). In the interest of being thorough, a table of email counts, open rates, and CTR metrics can be found below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Emails Sent (1st Wave / 2nd Wave)</th>
<th>Open Rate (1st Wave / 2nd Wave)</th>
<th>Clicks</th>
<th>Open Rate Avg / Click Through Rate (CTR) Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbells For Bullies</td>
<td>1338 / 1334</td>
<td>46% / 39%</td>
<td>104 / 85</td>
<td>42.5% / 7.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbells For Boobs</td>
<td>2591 / 2589</td>
<td>19.7% / 16.6%</td>
<td>95 / 58</td>
<td>18.2% / 2.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUT Athletics</td>
<td>8859 / 9479</td>
<td>15.6% / 15.1%</td>
<td>32 / 25</td>
<td>15.4% / 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETWOD</td>
<td>1004 / 1001</td>
<td>14% / 26%</td>
<td>48 / 54</td>
<td>20% / 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Procedure

The research proposal was sent to the GSU Institutional Review Board for approval to ensure there are no human violations or unethical practice and was consequently approved. The survey was conducted within the United States. The survey content also indicated clearly that participation is voluntary, and that no monetary compensation is being dispersed. The respondents of the survey should be affiliated with one of the partner organizations in some way, at the very least on their email list, for the organizations involved. Nobody under the age of 18 was permitted to take the survey. The survey will only be available in English since most, if not all, of the respondents are based in the US, as all the organizations are registered with the IRS under the 501(c) public charity IRS code. There are two items within the survey that controlled for this, and if a participant answered “no” when asked if they were over 18 years of age, or if they resided in the US, they were thanked for their time but not permitted to complete the survey.

While there can be a concern about the fidelity, accuracy, and the effectiveness of surveys conducted online (Pecáková, 2016), email surveys are still pertinent and can generate reliable outcome (Fricker et al., 2005).

3.4 Measures

A demographic questionnaire obtained each respondent’s age, gender, income, marital status, race/ethnicity and which organization they are familiar with at the end of the survey.

Age is to measure how old the respondent is in years.
Gender is the gender identity to which the respondent subscribes. Given that one of the organizations in the sample – OUT Athletics – is LGBTQ+ oriented, a non-binary option will be included as well male and female.

Race/ethnicity refers to the race or ethnic makeup of the respondent – white, African American, Asian, American Indian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and so forth.

Marital status refers to their current relationship status such as single, married/domestic partnership, widowed, separated, divorced, etc.

Income was bracketed out and referring to the respondent’s individual income, not household income in $10,000 increments up to $150,000, and then an “over $150,000” option.

The purpose of asking these demographic questions, under the purview of this study, is to ascertain whether any themes emerge with respect to these covariates and role relatedness plays in emotional brand attachment. What is more, this type of information can address any limitations of the study, for example, an overrepresentation of female respondents relative to the population (i.e. more than 51%) and to ensure demographic diversity within the sample. No other personal information was obtained, and this was a completely anonymous survey. The directions for the survey advised the respondent to think of the organization that sent them the email; if they received it from more than one, choose one and think of that one only. There was an item in the survey where they were instructed to type in the name of the organization they were answering about at the midpoint, and this served as a method of keeping the organization top-of-mind for the second half of the survey.

Since relatedness has not been measured in this context, certain studies were referenced and adapted to define the various dimensions of relatedness and EBA. Reis et al (2010) utilized an SDT framework to understand the role of relatedness, competence, and autonomy in overall
well-being. From the work of Deci and Ryan (2000, 2014), Reis et al., (2010), Lin (2016), four dimensions of relatedness were identified to test as the independent variable.

### 3.4.1 Measures of Relatedness

Since this research is exploratory in nature, and the dimensions of relatedness relative to emotional brand attachment have not been measured, some study measures have been adapted. Reis et al. (2010) utilized an SDT framework to understand the role of relatedness, competence, and autonomy in overall well-being. From the work of Deci and Ryan (2000, 2014), Reis et al., (2010), Lin (2016), four dimensions of relatedness (acceptance, connection, common interests, congruity) were identified to test as predictor variables.

It is worth noting that there does exist a scale for “need for relatedness” (Richer & Vallerand, 1998), however, this is based on a 10-point scale, and is a psychometric measurement. For consistency and codability, this study utilizes a 7-point Likert scale, like Rosenberg’s self-esteem scale (1965).

A reliability test was administered to determine the Cronbach’s alpha on each dimension of relatedness to confirm they were sufficiently related before summing each dimension into discrete scales of acceptance, connection, common interests, and congruity. All scales were found to be highly reliable.

The Acceptance scale consisting of 5 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .914$). The Connection scale consisting of 5 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .841$). The Common Interests scale consisting of 5 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .813$). The Congruity scale consisting of 9 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .962$) (adapted from Helm et al., 2016).
Acceptance and interpersonal support. This dimension is predicated on the premise of feeling “understood and appreciated” as well as generally accepted (Reis et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2014). A series of 5 questions asked respondents to agree or disagree on a 7-point Likert scale with statements that ask about general feelings of acceptance and support from the organization/brand. Questions like “The organization supports the community at large and the group(s) they endeavor to help” and “I feel that the organization is supportive of me, and people like me” are asked, and coded with anything being “Strongly agree” getting coded as a 7, and anything that is “Strongly Disagree” as a 1. The higher the aggregate score, the higher the influence of that specific dimension of relatedness. This has been adapted from Rosenberg (1965) and Helm et al. (2016).

Connection. These questions were phrased and coded in the same manner as acceptance and interpersonal support with a series of five questions asking respondent if they agree or disagree on 7-point Likert scales (Palmatier et al., 2008; Reis et al. 2010). Question examples are “I've made a meaningful personal connection to the organization and its mission” and “The organization's mission is important to me personally” which are clear, explicit questions about how connected the respondent feels to the cause, organization, and their mission. Once more, from a managerial and PR/strategic communication perspective, non-profit marketers and executive directors must find a way to establish more than just cause connection but foster “brand connection.” Since there are hundreds if not thousands of organizations that address causes like cancer awareness and prevention, animal advocacy, LGBTQ+ issues, and veteran’s issues, non-profit marketers must work to establish connection to the brand beyond mere connection to a cause. This level of personal connection inclines a supporter to be more involved
and dedicated to the brand and to the cause to which the brand is aligned. These were coded with strongly disagree being a 1, and strongly agree being a 7.

*Common interests* Common interests are an important dimension of relatedness, and especially salient to this study as many of the organizations in the sample are based on a common sport or athletic endeavor (CrossFit, weightlifting, martial arts, etc.) (Reis et al., 2010; Lin, 2016). Participating in shared activities is a facet of relatedness (Duck & Wright, 1993; Markman & Kraft, 1989; Wood & Inman, 1993) and these questions are asked in a 7-point Likert scale matrix also. Some of the questions are “I enjoy the activities the organization utilizes to raise money and awareness” and “Staying active is an important part of my life.” These were coded on a similar scale as above.

*Congruity*. This dimension has been sub-segmented out into Actual Self-Brand Congruity and Ideal Self-Brand Congruity (Lavigne, Vallerand, & Crevier-Braud, 2011; Malar et al. 2011). Based on the research to date that has examined emotional brand attachment from a SDT perspective regarding actual and ideal self (Bidmon et al. 2017; Helm et al. 2016; Malar et al. 2011) this segmentation is warranted. The questions have been adapted from Helm et al. 2016 using the same dimensions (Actual- and Ideal-Self) for congruity. For *Actual Self-Brand Congruity* questions like “The organization aligns with how I see myself” and “The organization's image and mission match my own” are asked, very similar to Helm et al. 2016. For *Ideal Self-Brand Congruity* questions like “The organization exudes qualities that I would like to exude one day” and “The organization mirrors who I'd like to be” are asked. These questions are also in 7-point scale and are consistent given the nuances of actual/ideal-self research (Sirgy, 1982).
# Table 3 Measures of Relatedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Measuring items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance &amp; Support</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc1</td>
<td>The organization supports the community at large and the group(s) they endeavor to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc2</td>
<td>I feel that the organization is supportive of me, and people like me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc3</td>
<td>I feel the organization is accepting of all types of people, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, income, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc4</td>
<td>I feel the organization accepts me and who I am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acc5</td>
<td>My friends are supportive of my efforts in helping the organization achieve its mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn1</td>
<td>I've made a meaningful personal connection to the organization and its mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn2</td>
<td>I identify with the group(s) the organization is endeavoring to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn3</td>
<td>I am close to the cause that the organization supports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn4</td>
<td>The organization's mission is important <em>to me personally</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conn5</td>
<td>I've made friends and connections through my involvement with the organization and/or their events.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted from: Reis et al., 2010; Deci & Ryan, 2014

Adopted from: Palmatier et al., 2008; Reis et al. 2010
### Common Interests

**Adopted from:** Reis et al., 2010; Lin, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CInt</th>
<th>I enjoy the activities the organization utilizes to raise money and awareness.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fitness is an important part of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staying active is an important part of my life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A healthy lifestyle is something of great interest to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friends are interested in the same things as me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Congruity

**Adopted from:** Helm et al. 2016, Malar et al. 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>The organization aligns with how I see myself.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization's image and mission matches my own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization's image is how I view myself in reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization mirrors who I really am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization represents many aspects of myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal</td>
<td>The organization exudes qualities that I would like to exude one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization represents many aspects that would embody my ideal self-image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization is very similar to the ideal image I have of myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organization mirrors who I'd like to be.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.2 Measurement of Emotional Brand Attachment

To measure the dependent variable, several studies have been adapted and employed. The concept of emotions and feelings are integral aspects of emotional brand attachment (Helm et al.
Japutra et al. (2014) defined brand attachment as being comprised of emotions, self-connection, and importance (in this case brand or product importance, but for the context of this study, overall importance). The predictors of this attachment were identified as items such as self-congruity, experience, responsiveness, quality, and reputation of the brand, whereas the outcomes were behaviors such as an intention to recommend/repurchase, resilience to negative information, and the act of defending the brand (Japutra et al., 2014). Similarly, Malar et al. (2011) found that affection and passion were items that constructed brand attachment. Some questions from both studies were adapted, specifically with Malar et al. (2011) being used to establish feelings and brand passion.

Consequently, Helm et al. (2016) examined brand citizenship behaviors, as a proxy for brand attachment. Their findings were consistent with the other research. The outcomes of brand attachment have been characterized as Word of Mouth and/or defending the brand i.e., identifying with the brand and evangelizing the brand (Malar et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2014). For further fidelity and to establish a firm ground of emotional brand attachment, Helm et al. (2016) was adapted for the following dimensions:

**Brand Citizenship Behavior (BCB)** is defined as discretionary, self-authored behavior which in sum enhances the brand and mainly refers to participation (in events, in this context) as well as positive word of mouth (outside the events, in social settings) (Bolino & Turnley, 2003; Tracy & Robins, 2007; Helm et al., 2016).

**Brand Pride (BP)** may motivate supporters to do more than is asked of them, to show passion for the brand, and become brand champions (Morhart et al., 2009; Helm et al. 2016).

**Brand Identification (BI)** ties into self-concept (Sirgy, 1982) but also is a marker of consistency in the brand living up to the brand promise and verifying consistency with the self to
avoid cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1954; Morhart et al., 2009; Swann, 1983). From a brand citizenship behavior perspective, BI allows supporters to “live and personify” the brand and become a true brand advocate that is emotionally attached to the brand or cause (Helm et al., 2016).

*Involvement* refers to how involved the respondent is with the organization. This contained a series of four questions which ask how many total events they have participated in, how much money they have raised for the organization, how many fundraisers they have participated in (either by donating, competing, or fundraising themselves) and how many years they have been a supporter. This was used to give them an overall involvement score by bracketing out each level of responses (i.e., 0 events, 1-2 events, 3-5 events, or more than 5 events, and aggregating the score.) Anybody that has participated in more than 5 events would be coded as a “super-supporter” and highly involved in the organization. This same process was applied to each question on involvement. The question pertaining to how long they had been a supporter of the organization was dropped in the final analysis, as only 2 of the 4 organizations in the sample had been around for more than five years.

These markers of brand attachment can be operationalized in a survey as a method of measuring emotional brand attachment (adapted from Helm et al., 2016, Malar et al., 2011). From a conceptual standpoint, respondents that take pride in a brand, identify with a brand, and make it part of their self-concept (be it actual or ideal), take part in brand citizenship behaviors, and in addition are highly involved and actively participating in events, will be more attached to a brand; this is consistent with the current literature. This is of importance to this study, and brand citizenship behavior is one of the results that non-profit organizations are seeking: supporters being attached enough to a brand to support it vocally in their social circles.
These measurements of brand attachment have been well established in the literature and will be utilized in this study.

A reliability test was also administered to determine the Cronbach’s alpha on each dimension of emotional brand attachment: brand passion/feelings, brand pride, brand identification, and brand citizenship behavior, and involvement. All scales were found to be highly reliable.

The passion/feelings scale consisting of 4 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .847$). The brand identification scale consisting of 3 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .819$). The brand pride scale consisting of 3 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .897$). The brand citizenship scale consisting of 3 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .784$). The involvement scale consisting of 3 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .795$) (adapted from Helm et al., 2016; Japutra et al., 2014; Malar et al., 2011).

Since these items were then condensed into a single scale for emotional brand attachment, a reliability test needed to be conducted to establish reliability of the superscale. The superscale for emotional brand attachment, consisting of 16 items, was found to be highly reliable ($\alpha= .729$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4 Measures of Emotional Brand Attachment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measuring items</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brand Passion, Feelings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBA1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBA2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBA3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EBA4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brand Pride**

Adopted from: Helm et al. 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BP1</th>
<th>When I tell others what the organization does, I do so with a sense of pride.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BP2</td>
<td>The organization stands for attributes and a cause that makes me proud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BP3</td>
<td>It makes me proud when people know I am affiliated with the organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brand Identification**

Adopted from: Helm et al. 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BI</th>
<th>When someone criticizes the organization, I take it as a personal insult.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When the organization has a success, I feel like I have a success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When someone praises the organization, I feel as if it’s a personal compliment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brand Citizenship Behavior**

Adopted from: Helm et al. 2016

| BCB1 | I recommend the organization/brand to friends and family. |
I support the organization wherever I can, even if it’s not directly affiliated with the organization I.E. Amazon Smile or Facebook Fundraisers on their behalf.

In order to help the organization, I voluntarily do things that will help their mission in my day to day life. (Examples could include education, engaging in conversations, volunteering at a local organization related to the cause, etc).

**Involvement**

Adopted from:
Japutra et al. 2014, Malar et al. 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involv1</th>
<th>How many TOTAL events (if applicable) have you taken part in that are affiliated with the organization?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involv2</td>
<td>If you have fundraised for the organization, how much have you raised?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involv3</td>
<td>How many fundraisers have you participated in that are affiliated with the organization - either by donating, competing or as a fundraiser?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve4</td>
<td>How many years have you been a supporter of the organization?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 **Statistical Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27 was employed for data analysis.

Because we are investigating the influence relatedness (and the four dimensions thereof) exerts to predict emotional brand attachment, we utilized a standard multiple regression model. The goal was to examine whether and to what extent the four dimensions of relatedness as an aggregate set of variables predict emotional brand attachment. Moreover, a secondary aim was to examine to what extent each of the individual dimensions of relatedness predict variance in EBA.
4 RESULTS

4.1 Results and Analysis

A survey administered via Qualtrics was sent out to the active subscribers of the organizations that participated (Barbells For Boobs, Barbells for Bullies, OUT Athletics, and VETWOD; Tap Cancer Out opted to not participate in this study after initially agreeing). The total amount of supporters emailed was 14,403 total emails, with responses from 494 total participants. The data was then cleaned, and of those 494 responses, 29 submissions were dropped due to not being residents of the United States. An additional 88 responses were omitted due to respondents not answering the questions regarding dimensions of relatedness or submitting an incomplete survey. A total response pool of 377 responses remained. Based on the G*Power analysis, the sample size is not large enough to detect a conventionally small effect (.02) so if there were non-significant results related to the overall model, it may be because the effect was too small to be detected based on the sample. This will be addressed in the limitations sections as well.

Each dimension was then aggregated in SPSS under a single dimensional factor – Acceptance, Connection, Common Interest, and Congruity. For the initial analysis, Congruity combined both Ideal Self Brand Congruity (ISBC) items and Actual Self Brand Congruity (ABSC).

The dependent variables that made up dimensions of emotional brand attachment were aggregated in a similar way, with items relating to Emotional Brand Attachment, Brand Citizenship Behavior, Brand Pride, and Brand Identification. One aspect of involvement was omitted as an indicator of emotional brand attachment (Involv4), as some of the participating organizations had not been in existence for 5+ years (VETWOD & Barbells For Bullies), nor did
they conduct events online or potentially near participants (OUT Athletics & Barbells for Boobs).

A multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables (acceptance, connection, common interests, and congruity) predict the dependent variable (emotional brand attachment). The linear combination of the independent variables was significantly related to emotional brand attachment: $F(4, 294) = 104.333, p < 0.001$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient, $R$, was 0.77, and $R^2$ was .59 which indicates that approximately 59% of the variance of emotional brand attachment comes from these dimensions of relatedness. Three of the four dimensions of relatedness were found to be predictors of emotional brand attachment. However, only two of the predictors were shown to be positive predictors of emotional brand attachment. Connection ($t = 9.233, p < 0.001, \beta = .508$), and congruity ($t = 10.947, p < 0.001, \beta = .501$) both exerted a positive influence and nearly equal influence on emotional brand attachment. Acceptance ($t = -4.015, p < 0.001, \beta = -0.212$), by contrast, was exposed as a significant negative predictor. Common interests ($t = .042, p = 0.967, \beta = .002$), did not have a significant predictive effect on EBA in this study.

Table 5 Relatedness Dimensions on Emotional Brand Attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>Adj. $R^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relatedness</td>
<td>4, 294</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>-4.015</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>-0.212</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>9.233</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Interests</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>.521</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congruity</td>
<td>10.947</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.1 Predictive Effect of Actual vs. Ideal Self Brand Congruity

Further analysis with respect to RQ2 was conducted to examine which aspect of sub-dimension of congruity was the most influence on emotional brand attachment – actual or ideal?

A multiple linear regression was conducted to evaluate which mode of congruity was more influential – actual self-brand congruity or ideal self-brand congruity and which could predict the dependent variable (emotional brand attachment). The results indicated that both were of nearly equal influence in predicting emotional brand attachment with Actual-Self Brand Congruity \( (t = 5.359, p < 0.001, \beta = .381) \), Ideal-Self Brand Congruity \( (t = 4.687, p < 0.001, \beta = .333) \). Actual-Self Brand Congruity, then, is a slightly more influential predictor of emotional brand attachment in the data set relative to ideal-self brand congruity, but Ideal-Self Brand Congruity does hold a significant amount of relative importance.

| Table 6 Analysis of Congruity Dimensions on Emotional Brand Attachment |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Dimensions                                    | \( t \) | \( p \) | \( \beta \) | \( df \) | \( p \) | Adj. \( R^2 \) |
| Congruity                                     |       |      |      |       | < .001 | .46 |
| Actual-Self Brand Congruity                   | 5.359 | < .001 | .381 | 2, 297 |       |     |
| Ideal Self Brand Congruity                    | 4.687 | < .001 | .333 | 2, 297 |       |     |
5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion

The goal of this research was to explore the influence of relatedness on emotional brand attachment. The first research question asked was what is the influence of relatedness, specifically for fitness-oriented nonprofits, on emotional brand attachment? Based on the results relatedness is a strong predictor of emotional brand attachment, but only certain dimensions have exerted a positive effect.

Furthermore, this research also endeavored to ascertain if specific dimensions of relatedness more influential than others in fostering emotional brand attachment? If so, which ones? It is clear given the results that the dimensions of congruity, connection and acceptance are most influential. Acceptance, as the data suggests, exerts a negative influence in fostering emotional brand attachment to fitness related non-profits. Congruity and connection, then, are the strongest predictors of emotional brand attachment in the data set, and the results are insignificant regarding common interests. In other words, brands that can develop a connection and establish an actual-self or ideal-self congruence between the brand and their supporters will likely experience positive emotional brand attachment. These results are highly consistent with the theoretical model espoused earlier in the study, in that relatedness is a strong predictor of emotional brand attachment with respect to fitness-based non-profits.

The negative predictive relationship between acceptance and emotional brand attachment requires more inquiry, but some thoughts are as follows. Given that involvement with a charity or cause is largely self-guided, self-authored, and likely “authentic,” a brand identity (and by extension a message design) that harps on “acceptance” (e.g., The organization accepts me, the
organization is accepting of all types of people, the organization is supportive of me and people like me) may be viewed as pandering. As an aside, the exception to this notion may be with organizations where acceptance and tolerance are part of their mission and brand identity, as is the case with OUT Athletics. Unfortunately, there were not enough samples in the data set to run a separate analysis to examine this hypothesis (n=35). Presumably, involvement with a charitable brand is driven by something that is self-directed and regarded as important on a personal level, so the need for exterior acceptance will not be a “need” they are looking to fulfill (if this is viewed from a SDT framework). In fact, affiliation with the organization may be motivated by something other than a desire to be accepted, and the research regarding motives for charitable involvement by Weipking and Bekkers (2011) and Webber (2004) are in accordance with this. Supporters may be motivated by one of the mechanisms outlined in Table 1 by Weipking and Bekkers (2011), like a seeing a need in the community, genuine altruism, peer pressure and so on. More research could be done to examine the interplay between relatedness and motivations.

Connection with the mode of fundraising (i.e., CrossFit or fitness) is salient, as is a connection with the cause the organization is endeavoring to help. The cause needs to be of personal importance to the supporter for them to have an emotional brand attachment to a brand that tries to aid that specific cause. Moreover, since there is a close personal connection with that cause, there would likely be some dimension of actual-self congruity. This also is consistent with the dimensions altruism and values discovered by Weipking and Bekkers (2011).

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First and foremost, it examines a yet unexplored mini-theory of SDT within the EBA literature – Relationship Motivation Theory – and illustrates that relatedness is a predictor of emotional brand attachment in this setting. Granted this is specifically for fitness-related nonprofits, however, this also adds to the literature
regarding participation and driving factors in charity sporting event participants, adding to the work of Bennett et. al. (2007), Woolf, Heere and Walker (2013), and Filo et al. (2013). The results also indicate that the concept of Gemeinschaft, the social relations between individuals based on close personal ties, is not only relevant but one of the driving factors for involvement with the organizations in this study. However, rather counterintuitively, acceptance/support is a negative predictor of emotional brand attachment.

Secondly, this study confirms observations by Malar et al. (2011) that “self-enhancement activities can lead to a positive relationship between ideal self-congruence and emotional brand attachment,” and the findings of this study are consistent with this observation; in addition to the finding that actual-self brand congruence is of slightly more (but nearly equal) importance relative to ideal-self brand congruence with respect to emotional brand attachment. Razmus (2017) also found actual-self brand congruence to be especially important to emotional brand attachment, and this study corroborates those findings in yet another context. This has some implications and key findings that can inform communication strategy.

From a non-profit management perspective, both actual and ideal-self brand congruence are useful. Since the role of actual-self brand congruence is concerned with the supporter’s identity in the here-and-now, this is salient as this consumer/supporter can be empowered to make a difference by supporting the organization(s). Notwithstanding, the ideal-self brand congruence dimension is also important, as it is aspirational in nature, and gives a consumer/supporter something to aspire to. Strategic communication efforts and messaging should concern themselves with blending both messages together to attain the maximum effect and higher levels of emotional brand attachment from prospective supporters – as this will empower and inspire them. The data in this study clearly supports this perspective given that
they exert significant influence as predictive factors of emotional brand attachment when coupled together in both regression analyses.

And finally, this study confirms Deci and Ryan’s (2000) observation that relatedness is “not an emergent trait but was instead an element of a deep structure that became increasing elaborated and refined under selective pressure” (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 253); and evidentiarily supports that humans have a tendency towards “reciprocal altruism.” This desire to “cohere with one’s group” and seek out intimacy, connection, support, and internalize needs and values in order to coordinate with others in the group is not only crucial to understanding the concept of reciprocal altruism, but crucial to us as humans, according to Deci and Ryan (2000, p.253).

Suffice it to say that relatedness seems to be an important predictor of emotional brand attachment. To tie these concepts together, “relationships are purposive, they add structure and meaning in a person’s life” (Fournier, 1998, p. 344). The reason emotional brand attachment is so vital, so important for both non-profits and commercial endeavors alike, is that it is an enduring, parasocial bond that binds consumer/support and brand together in a meaningful way. Within these brand relationships, there can exist commitment, even intimacy; and that feelings of attachment and love “lay at the core of all strong brand relationships” (Fournier, 1998, p. 363).

If non-profit organizations can create an emotional brand attachment, and leverage the dimensions of relatedness to do so, they will presumably form deep, emotional bonds not just with their cause but also with their brand. If they can forge this type of bond, they will form “super-stakeholders” which will carry out their mission on behalf of them, increasing their reach, resources, and scope – virtually in perpetuity as these are strong, enduring emotional attachments.
5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The purpose of this study was very focused; however, the managerial implications of this study and its results can be utilized by marketers, strategic communicators, and non-profit managers to further refine their outreach, brand image, and strategic communication efforts when endeavoring to create organizational stakeholders. The current study aimed to fill the dearth of research regarding RMT under the SDT framework, specifically with respect to emotional brand attachment. No other aspects of SDT were examined (i.e., autonomy and mastery). This is primarily due to the paucity of research concerning RMT and the role that relatedness plays in predicting EBA, and this study aimed to address that lacuna. While there is ample research and speculation that relatedness is the primary force and the tenet of SDT that buttresses all others, this study aimed to examine that assertion more in depth (Deci & Ryan, 2014; Gilal et al., 2019).

However, this study is not without its limitations. First and foremost, the scope of this study was only examined fitness-related non-profit organizations, and no other types of non-profits or other commercial brands. Furthermore, the non-profits in this sample are centered around a certain community and very niched; CrossFit, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and Functional Fitness are all very small communities relative to the fitness space, and very intense ones at that. The types of people that gravitate to high-intensity exercise and combat sports may not represent people that are casually into fitness. The niched nature of these sports lend itself to community, which in turn does lend itself to testing the concept of “relatedness.” This may present a bias, and further research is needed to confirm or deny this presumption.

The data was only concerned with CrossFit and Functional Fitness related organizations that use these sports as either a means of raising money or leveraging the same types of people within the community. There may exist a certain psychological predilection that is pervasive
within this pool of respondents that may bias the results - an affinity for community, for example. This should be replicated with other organizations that utilize physical activities to raise money or awareness. An attempt was made to control for this bias by including Tap Cancer Out, a charity that utilizes Brazilian Jiu Jitsu to raise money and awareness for cancer research, but this organization opted out of participating after agreeing initially.

This study also only used a survey to gather data, where another study could be done in a qualitative capacity. Given that the “involvement” metric was removed, this may also be another point to examine on an organization-by-organization basis, so one may control for interorganizational differences such as time in existence, access to events, and the like. Also, some organizations had more responses than others – for example, Barbells for Bullies garnered 117 responses (from the self-report, mid-point validation question) whereas OUT Athletics had 35 responses. VETWOD garnered 56 responses, and 95 were regarding Barbells For Boobs. The remaining 77 responses were completed surveys, but lacked the mid-point validation response.

Regarding the negative predictive relationship of acceptance, it would be interesting to see if this is consistent across organizations as it is reasonable to assume that organizations like OUT Athletics that are concerned with LGBTQ+ rights and equality may have a larger need for acceptance than other organizations in the sample. More research could be completed to examine differences in dimensions of relatedness and their influence on emotional brand attachment for each organization. This warrants a more nuanced analysis with a larger sample size.

This study did ask about other covariates – such as income, race/ethnicity, marital status, income, etc., but this list is not exhaustive. More covariates and demographic information could be included at a future time to garner more insights, such as geographic location, level of education, and so forth. What is more, the initial analysis for this study did not include these
covariates within the predictors. A future study could be conducted to see if there are any correlations within this data set between age, ethnicity, marital status, etc., and predictive capacity of dimensions of relatedness to emotional brand attachment. More qualitative research, such as interviews, with “super-supporters” to glean more insights from them directly as to their motivations, reasons, and overall feelings of attachment to a brand could be conducted as well.

Future research should be conducted to examine the role of relatedness in emotional brand attachment on the general fitness-oriented population, perhaps people that sign up for a casual charity sporting event, such as a 5k walk or fun-run. This concept should be tested in a commercial capacity, as much of the other research referenced in this paper has done (Chang & Tung, 2016; Grisaffe & Nguyen, 2011; Helm et al., 2016; Hung & Lu, 2018; Japutra et al., 2014; Proksch et al., 2015; Razmus et al., 2017; Thomson, 2006) to see if dimensions of relatedness within “brand communities” exert the same importance on emotional brand attachment. There also exists a need to examine to concept of “authenticity” and how it interacts with the dimensions of relatedness. While there has been research on iconic and indexical authenticity (Grayson & Martinec, 2004), methods of establishing authenticity (Athwal & Harris, 2018), establishing a scale for authenticity (Morhart et al., 2015), and strategic approaches to building value (Napoli et al., 2016), more research is needed to examine the interplay between actual-ideal self, relatedness, and authenticity. Given the weight of relatedness in predicting emotional brand attachment, influenced by actual and ideal self-brand congruity, there is likely a correlation with authenticity. Another aspect worth examining, especially in the context of fitness-related non-profits, would be their “perceived brand authenticity” and its influence on emotional brand attachment (Moulard et al., 2016), especially given the relative importance of connection as a predictive dimension.
5.3 Managerial Implications

Even though this study was exploratory in nature regarding the extant research of RMT, many actionable insights were gleaned. From a managerial and strategic communication perspective, this study illustrates some best practices that may be enacted when it comes to advertising and outreach by similar fitness-based non-profit organizations. Some best practices would be to create messaging that enforces the concept of actual self, in that supporters can “comes as they are,” and make a difference, doing what they like and enjoy. What’s more, an appeal to the aspirational and ideal self can work, but only in that it is attainable by working with the organization e.g. “Do you want to help animals? You can, right now, by entering this event.” In this sense, non-profit marketers can make their brand promise work as a vehicle for supporters to reach their ideal-self destination.

Per the results, messaging that centers around acceptance should be avoided, as it appears from this data set that the dimension of acceptance is negatively predictive of emotional brand attachment. Also given the weight of connection in predicting EBA, if a population cares and has a personal connection to the cause that the brand exists to help, there exists a significant enough influence for them to become brand attached.

From a practical application perspective, non-profit marketers and executive directors could create pieces of marketing content that exude connection – be it personal or to the specific cause – but also a sense of actual or ideal-self congruence (by having depictions of people that resemble their supporters or their aspirational selves). These pieces of creative on social media or via email engagements could then be monitored to see if one garners more traction than another, assigning key KPIs to monitor the interactions, such as clicks, shares, likes, comments, etc.
While the causes each organization exists to support are vastly different – breast cancer research, shelter animal advocacy, veteran’s issues, and LGBTQ+ rights – they utilize an active and fit lifestyle to raise money and awareness, and relatedness is a significant predictor of emotional brand attachment for each. Exuding this sense of relatedness and concentrating on the dimensions of actual self-brand congruity and connection will likely yield the best results, so long as it is done honestly, authentically, and consistent with the brand’s mission and message.

SDT is a “growth oriented” and “needs based” psychological framework. Brands that offer a brand promise of helping supporters “grow” (or become “better” in some capacity), and offer an avenue to fill that need, have ample reason to utilize a SDT-rooted communication approach, especially non-profit brands when they design and refine their future communication strategy.

The results of this study are clear: creating strategic communication around specific dimensions of relatedness (congruity and connection), specifically for fitness-related non-profits, will aid in creating supporters that are emotionally attached to the brand.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Appendix A.1

Table 0 Volunteer Hours and Trends Since 2008, *National Center for Charitable Statistics, 2020*

Statistics, 2020

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of population volunteering</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>25.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers (millions)</td>
<td>61.8</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>62.8</td>
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<td>64.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours volunteered (billions)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average hours per volunteer</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>132</td>
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<td>133</td>
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<td>Median hours per volunteer</td>
<td>52</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per average day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent of population volunteering</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of volunteers (millions)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hours per day per volunteer</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.86</td>
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Value of volunteers

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Population age 16 and over (millions)</th>
<th>234.4</th>
<th>236.3</th>
<th>238.3</th>
<th>240</th>
<th>243.8</th>
<th>246.2</th>
<th>248.4</th>
<th>251.3</th>
<th>253.6</th>
<th>256</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time-equivalent employees (millions)</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned hourly wages for volunteers (millions)</td>
<td>$18.08</td>
<td>$18.63</td>
<td>$19.0</td>
<td>$19.47</td>
<td>$19.7</td>
<td>$20.16</td>
<td>$20.59</td>
<td>$21.0</td>
<td>$21.6</td>
<td>$22.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assigned value of volunteer time ($) (billions)</td>
<td>$144.7</td>
<td>$150.7</td>
<td>$154.</td>
<td>$164.8</td>
<td>$168.</td>
<td>$167.2</td>
<td>$179.2</td>
<td>$179.</td>
<td>$187.</td>
<td>$195.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B

Relatedness & Brand Attachment

Start of Block: Directions

Thank you for taking the time to take this survey! This should take roughly 10 minutes to complete, and will not require any purchase or personally identifiable information. We are just
looking for your honest feedback.

The purpose of this study is to identify key factors in your support of various fitness-related nonprofit organizations. Your answers will help us learn more about your relationship with the organization that sent you this survey, and the information will be shared with that organization to help them, as well.

Please keep the following in mind as you complete the survey:

1) Please be thoughtful and deliberate in your responses.

2) If you received this email from more than one organization - please choose only one and answer the questions from that perspective. Ideally, this will be the one you opened and clicked. We do realize that there may be crossover between supporters of each organization, as many of us inhabit the same fitness-oriented space. **If you already filled this survey out for one organization, please do not retake it.**
18+ Are you over 18 years of age?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you over 18 years of age? = No

US Based Do you reside in the United States?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you reside in the United States? = No

End of Block: 18+, US Citizen Check

Start of Block: Basic Demographics

GENDER Gender

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Nonbinary (3)
AGE Age

- 18-24 (1)
- 25-34 (2)
- 35-44 (3)
- 45-54 (4)
- 55-64 (5)
- 65+ (6)

Ethnicity

- White (1)
- Black or African American (2)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (3)
- Asian (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Other (6)
Income: What is your annual personal income? (NOT household income)

- Less than $10,000 (1)
- $10,000 - $19,999 (2)
- $20,000 - $29,999 (3)
- $30,000 - $39,999 (4)
- $40,000 - $49,999 (5)
- $50,000 - $59,999 (6)
- $60,000 - $69,999 (7)
- $70,000 - $79,999 (8)
- $80,000 - $89,999 (9)
- $90,000 - $99,999 (10)
- $100,000 - $149,999 (11)
- More than $150,000 (12)
MARITAL What is your marital status?

- Married / Domestic Partnership (1)
- Widowed (2)
- Divorced (3)
- Separated (4)
- Single (5)
- Unmarried, but in a committed long-term relationship (6)

End of Block: Basic Demographics

Start of Block: Pre-Survey Directions

DIRECTIONS

For this portion, please think of the organization that sent you the survey email.

Please keep that organization top of mind for the duration of the survey.

Please think only of the organization when answering, and NOT the cause which it endeavors to help.
Acc1 The organization supports the community at large and the group(s) they endeavor to help.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
Acc2 I feel that the organization is supportive of me, and people like me.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Acc3 I feel the organization is accepting of all types of people, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, income, etc.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
Acc4 I feel the organization accepts me and who I am.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

Acc5 My friends, family and/or colleagues are supportive of my efforts in helping the organization achieve its mission

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Acceptance & Support
Conn1 I've made a meaningful personal connection to the organization and it's mission.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
○ Somewhat agree (5)
○ Agree (6)
○ Strongly agree (7)

Conn2 I identify with the group(s) the organization is endeavoring to help.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
○ Somewhat agree (5)
○ Agree (6)
○ Strongly agree (7)
Conn3 I am close to the cause that the organization supports. i.e. I have a vested interest in the causes they're supporting.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
○ Somewhat agree (5)
○ Agree (6)
○ Strongly agree (7)

Conn4 The organization's mission is important to me personally.

○ Strongly disagree (1)
○ Disagree (2)
○ Somewhat disagree (3)
○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
○ Somewhat agree (5)
○ Agree (6)
○ Strongly agree (7)
Conn5 I've made friends and connections through my involvement with the organization and/or their events.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Connection

Start of Block: Involvement

Involv1 How many events (if applicable) have you taken part in that are affiliated with the organization?

- 0 (1)
- 1-2 (2)
- 3-4 (3)
- 5+ (4)
Involv2 If you have fundraised for the organization, how much have you raised?

- $0-$100 (1)
- $101-$500 (2)
- $501-$1000 (3)
- $1001-$2500 (4)
- $2500+ (5)

Involv3 How many fundraisers have you participated in that are affiliated with the organization - either by donating, competing or as a fundraiser?

- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3-5 (3)
- 6-9 (4)
- 10+ (5)
Involve4 How many years have you been a supporter of the organization?

- Less than a year (1)
- 1-2 years (2)
- 3-5 years (3)
- 5+years (4)

End of Block: Involvement

Start of Block: Common Interests

CINT1 I enjoy the activities the organization utilizes to raise money and awareness.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
CINT2 Fitness is an important part of my life.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

CINT3 Staying active is an important aspect of my life.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
CINT4 A healthy lifestyle is something of great interest to me.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

CINT5 My friends are interested in the same things as me.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Common Interests

Start of Block: Actual-Self Brand Congruity
ACBC1 The organization aligns with how I see myself

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

ACBC2 The organization's image and mission matches my own

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
ACBC3 The organization's image is how I view myself in reality

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

ACBC4 The organization mirrors who I really am

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
ACBC4 The organization represents many aspects of myself

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Actual-Self Brand Congruity

Start of Block: Ideal-Self Brand Congruity

ISBC1 The organization exudes qualities that I would like to exude one day

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
ISBC2 The organization represents many aspects that would embody my ideal self image

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

ISBC3 The organization is very similar to the ideal image I have of myself

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
ISBC4 The organization mirrors who I'd like to be

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Ideal-Self Brand Congruity

Start of Block: Emotional Brand Attachment (Emotions)

EBA1 My feelings toward the organization/brand can be characterized as love or affection.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
EBA2 My feelings toward the organization/brand can be characterized by a personal connection, either to the cause or to people involved with the cause.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

EBA3 I am passionate about the cause the organization is involved with.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
EBA4 The organization is taking on an important cause.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Emotional Brand Attachment (Emotions)

Start of Block: Fitness v Cause importance check

Fitness v Cause Thinking of the organization, how important on a scale of 1-10 are the below items for you when it comes to supporting and participating in their events/fundraisers, with 0 not at all being important, and 10 being of utmost importance?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
| Supporting the cause () |  
|------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Fitness ()             |  
| Competition ()         |  
| Winning Prizes/Incentive () |  
| Making a positive difference in the community () |  

End of Block: Fitness v Cause importance check

Start of Block: Top of Mind Check

Midpoint Validation

In order to keep them top of mind, please type in the organization that you're answering about and that sent you the survey below:

________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Top of Mind Check

Start of Block: Brand ID
Brand ID Please evaluate the following statements:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree (1)</th>
<th>Agree (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat agree (3)</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree (4)</th>
<th>Somewhat disagree (5)</th>
<th>Disagree (6)</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- When someone criticizes the organization, I take it as a personal insult.

(1)
When the organization has a success, I feel like I have a success.

(2)
When someone praises the organization, I feel as if it's a personal complement.
BP1 When I tell others what the organization does, I do so with a sense of pride.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

BP2 The organization stands for attributes and a mission that makes me proud.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
BP3 It makes me proud when people know I am affiliated with the organization.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Brand Pride

Start of Block: Brand Citizenship Behavior

BCB1 I recommend the organization/brand to friends and family.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
BCB2 I support the organization wherever I can, even if it's not directly affiliated with the organization I.E. Amazon Smile or Facebook Fundraisers on their behalf.

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)
In order to help the organization, I voluntarily do things that will help their mission in my day to day life. (Examples could include education, engaging in conversations, volunteering at a local organization related to the cause, etc)

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat disagree (3)
- Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- Somewhat agree (5)
- Agree (6)
- Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Brand Citizenship Behavior

Start of Block: Other NPO Familiarity

CROSSPOLL I am familiar with these organizations (click to choose, can pick more than 1)

- Barbells For Boobs (1)
- Barbells For Bullies (2)
- Tap Cancer Out (3)
- OUT Athletics (Formerly OUTWOD) (4)
- VETWOD (5)
Appendix C

Initial Email Sample Script:

Dear Supporter,

We are participating in an academic research study to learn more about fitness-related non-profits, their supporters and their attitudes, and the motivations for being involved with us as an organization.

If you would please spare roughly ten minutes and fill out THIS SURVEY you can help with some academic research that can be used to help us and other non-profits like us with our strategic communication and outreach efforts. The author of this study is a graduate student and will be sharing the results with our organization and this would be very helpful to us.

Please consider filling out the brief survey, as your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

<Organization>

Follow Up Script:

Dear Supporter,

About a week ago we sent out an email asking for your help in filling out a brief survey that would take approximately ten-minutes for an academic research study that endeavors to learn more about the support base of fitness-related non-profits like us.

These results will be shared with us, thanks to the student researcher, and would help us with our strategic communication and outreach efforts.

Please consider taking the time to fill out the brief survey linked HERE.

Thank you so much for your support and help with this project!

Sincerely,

<Organization>
### Appendix D

#### Correlation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The organization represents many aspects of myself</th>
<th>The organization represents many aspects that would allow me to be the ideal self image</th>
<th>The organization represents an image that I would like to achieve one day</th>
<th>The organization is very similar to the ideal image I have of myself</th>
<th>The organization represents an image that I find myself</th>
<th>The organization represents the image I view myself in reality</th>
<th>The organization's image and mission matches my own</th>
<th>The organization's image is how I view myself in reality</th>
<th>The organization aligns with how I see myself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization represents many aspects of myself</td>
<td>0.90**</td>
<td>0.90**</td>
<td>0.91**</td>
<td>0.92**</td>
<td>0.92**</td>
<td>0.92**</td>
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<td>The organization represents an image that I find myself</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The organization represents the image I view myself in reality</td>
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<td>0.90**</td>
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<td>0.92**</td>
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<td>0.92**</td>
<td>0.92**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

---

**Figure 5 Correlational Matrix**