

BENEFITS OF MILITARY SERVICE: TESTING A MORE COMPLETE SPECTRUM

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Abstract

Recruitment or “Military Marketing” is an important business field in today’s All Volunteer Force (AVF) era. A two-step “Discover and Verify” branding research approach is proposed to improve military recruitment processes. Step 1 Discovery uses exploratory research with Millennial Generation combat veterans to identify more benefits to military service than self-interested incentives. Step 2 Verify tests the perceived value of a new set of 15 benefits including self-development, financial, and altruistic items. The importance of each is measured using a sample of 63 military and civilian Millennials. Implications for recruitment strategies and integrated marketing communications conclude the paper.

Key words: military enlistment benefits, military recruitment marketing, altruistic benefits, calculative benefits, military branding, brand perceptual equity, brand benefits, brand strategy, enlistment prospect motivations

Benefits of Military Service: Testing a More Complete Spectrum

In an era of All Volunteer Forces (AVF), military marketing is over a quarter of a billion dollar a year effort. It involves advertising agencies, marketing research firms and other integrated marketing communications suppliers who contribute to the recruitment of new military service members. In September, 2015 a recruiting contract for U.S. Navy marketing communications alone was listed as an annual \$85 million “win” for Y&R NY (AdAge).

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Moreover, this is an industry with international relevance as the militaries of EU countries continue to replace conscription with all-volunteer forces (AVF). Twenty-one of the 28 NATO countries have abolished the draft (Riegert 2017). While the countries do not compete with one another for recruits, expertise developed in marketing communications for recruitment is applicable across countries. This makes military marketing expertise a potentially global business enterprise for integrated marketing communications (IMC) firms who compete with each other for national contracts.

Military recruitment messaging is not yet a distinctly defined scholarly area of marketing communications. The relevance of marketing theory and practice to the recruitment task may be recognized by marketing practitioners, but its strategic value may not be fully understood by either marketing scholars or military recruiters. Considering military service as an entity to be purposefully branded is also a new idea to military and marketing researchers. We argue that branding is potentially very useful to recruitment efforts in an AVF era.

In practice, marketing communications are used to implement management efforts to build a brand's reputational imagery by maintaining positive brand perceptions in consumers' minds (Fournier 1998, Keller 2000). Its organizational impact is to focus management on long-term consistent messaging that enhances communications effectiveness (Calkins 2005)

Literature Review

In today's AVF climate, Millennials' perceptions of the benefits of military service as an advantageous pathway to adulthood requires persuasive marketing. Brands today are understood to be cultural signposts that influence consumer decision-making (Sherry 2005), a useful marketing idea for raising awareness of coming-of-age options among uncertain Millennials (Noble et. al. 2009, Silva 2012). We believe that using an approach explicitly designed around contemporary branding practices could improve effectiveness of recruitment communications.

For example, the concept of the Citizen Soldier has long stood for voluntary service since revolutionary times in the U.S. (Janowitz 1983, Karsten 2001, Krebs 2009). Might it not also be a brand signifying the all-volunteer military pathway to maturity? Were this possibility to be recognized, the currently marketed benefits of serving might be usefully revised. Current recruitment communications tend to focus on the self-interested post-service financial benefits offered and emphasize the self-development elements of the intangible benefits of serving (Moskos 2002, Darling 2017). This paper suggests that there may also be an added altruistic dimension of the value of military service to enlistees and veterans.

Regardless of branch, military recruitment research in the past three decades has largely investigated how the benefits of tangible G.I. Bill features like college tuition, home or small business loans can be improved (Moskos 2002). Yet civilian marketing theory has expanded the benefits spectrum for most goods and services beyond this functional utilitarian dimension (Calder 2005, Keller 2000, Ostrom, Iacobucci and Morgan, 2005).

Recent US Army recruitment efforts have added personal development, but still self-interested, benefits (Darling 2017). Today, effective branding practice relies on creating a broad range of perceptions associated with the brand in consumers' minds. These range from the tangible-functional (self-interested) to the intangible-aspirational (including altruistic).

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Marketing and advertising research has demonstrated that persuasive communications depend on developing an accurate understanding of product or service value *as perceived by its target market consumers* (Sherry 2005). Perceived value extends beyond product features and their tangible benefits to cultural associations and other social meanings (Tybout & Calkins 2005). Thus, defining a brand's user-perceptions of value is an important indicator of possible prospect motivations to purchase it.

Marketing theory has learned that creating consumer-perceived brand value means incorporating a brand's intangible (social, emotional, aspirational, and symbolic) benefits into its full repertoire of meanings (Sherry 2005). Intangibles are often the most compelling of the full set of a brand's perceived benefits, (Ostrom, Iacobucci and Morgan, 2005). Might that also be true for military service?

Treating Military Service as a “Brand” for Recruitment Marketing Planning

U.S. military service has evolved, along with national culture, through a series of historical episodes (Janowitz 1983, Karsten 2001, Krebs 2009). It begins with the Citizen Soldier during the American Revolution. This is the idea that a citizen takes up arms when needed for defense of the original 13 colonies (later to be the nation) and returns to civilian life when the threat is resolved (Jensen 1969, Janowitz 1981). As the nation grew in social and political complexity, the armed service of citizens evolved, but the aspirational symbol of the *Citizen Soldier as the volunteer* backbone of democracy's military persists.

In most of the nation's wars the government used drafted personnel for military service to achieve force requirements when voluntarism alone would not suffice. Both North and South sides in the Civil War drafted recruits. During both World Wars the draft, for the most part, was applied across classes, supported by national rhetoric and the actions of social institutions. In addition, these institutions fostered a sense of widespread societal urgency for military service that conscripts and volunteers alike would be required to provide, thus fostering a cultural environment that legitimized the draft and encouraged voluntary enlistment.

During the Vietnam Era (1955-1975), the unequal application of the draft, along with numerous other political and social cleavages, led to its elimination. General societal disenchantment with military service (Karsten 2001), gave rise to the AVF of today. This brought about the military necessity to market the opportunity to enlist and serve, engaging ad agencies and marketing firms to help. In this situation, the Citizen Soldier as a symbol gained a new relevance (Karsten 2001, Moskos 2002). Voluntarism as both a motive and a benefit in organizational incentive systems are not new ideas (Knoke and Wright-Isak 1982).

More recent recruitment marketing efforts have supplemented G.I. Bill benefits with self-interested “personal development” benefits in enlistment messaging (Darling 2017). Theoretically this assumes a calculative enlistment prospect (Krebs 2009). Although the becoming a “Citizen Soldier” for a portion of one's life might be driven by altruistic motives, that possibility fails to be investigated when one begins with the assumption of a calculative prospect (Krebs 2009).

Applying a civilian marketing perspective, we can understand the Citizen Soldier today to be a “naturally occurring” brand (Wright-Isak et. al., 2013), a symbolic idea that is widely perceived

and commonly understood, although not intentionally marketed as such. As a cultural icon for patriotism and military service, it has persisted in several ways. Historically, its images of heroic volunteers in various wars have conveyed the idea to civilians, often aided by art, cinema and newsreels and other media of cultural transmission that disseminates the idea widely in the national culture.

In contemporary times, military volunteers exemplify its spirit and make explicit “the brand meaning” (Sherry 2005). Within this naturally occurring Citizen Soldier brand symbolism (Douglas 1973), the service branches are intentionally marketed brand manifestations of this symbol. Existing perceptions of all these variants of the Citizen Soldier can be measured using long-established research techniques for optimizing communications (as numerous consumer brands do routinely). This is particularly helpful for the strategic planning aspect of recruitment messaging.

Discover and Verify Approach to Inventorying Brand Perceptual Equity

Marketing practitioners conduct research with *current brand users* to understand what satisfies them to learn how best to create a preference for it. This research often discovers benefits that are previously strategically unrecognized by management (Keller 2000). From that more complete knowledge, they can more accurately infer what factors are the most persuasive to future consumers. Once identified, marketers can test these factors with the brand’s prospective target consumers (Fournier 1998) to determine the relative strength of each one’s appeal. This process constitutes the “Discover and Verify” approach described in this paper.

Critiques of Recruitment Marketing: Absence of Culture in Strategy and Research

Military scholars have characterized American enlistment prospects in the AVF Era as *homo economicus* (Moskos 2002), assuming today’s citizen soldiers are benefits calculators, driven to enlist by the promise of self-development while enlisted and the promise of post-service benefits including college tuition, favorable mortgage rates for homebuyers or small business entrepreneurship loans. Recent military scholarship has questioned this narrow recruitment assumption (Krebs 2009) in ways that open military theorists to considering new marketing perspectives.

Offering three reconsiderations, Krebs (2009) first points out that *homo economicus* as a pre-defined concept rules out explicit recognition of anything other than calculative, self-interested motivations to enlist. Second, he challenges contemporary research samples used to investigate the military service benefits question, mostly 18-24 year-old Millennials who are the targets for recruitment messages. Research with these enlistment *prospects* who have not actually experienced both the positive and negative aspects of military service is unlikely to identify actual benefits of having served (Krebs 2009, p. 261). Third, Krebs insists that some acknowledgement must be made of the cultural context in which the research takes place, although he does not specifically define culture. We address the first two criticisms with the two-study research design proposed later in this paper.

The third (culture) variable has many dimensions, but two are especially relevant to recruitment in the 21st Century. One is the social process of coming of age for a generation with alternative, culturally shaped, paths to achieving adulthood (Noble 2009, Crampton & Hodge 2009). The other is the evolving set of expectations, beliefs and social role definitions that make up “culture” within the U.S. military as an institution (Karsten 2001, Hajjar 2014).

Civilian and Military Cultures

Even before scholars’ explicit acknowledgement of the importance of culture as a variable, Karsten (2001) implicitly understood the impact of changing U.S. social context on military recruitment. He recognized that changing societal cultural factors could affect the relative appeal of the tangible G.I. Bill rewards. He surmised that enlistment prospects compare military service to civilian career alternatives, and that civilian culture offers pathways to adulthood that might be preferred to the military service option.

In re-examining the G.I. Bill benefits of military recruitment versus the persuasiveness of non-military career paths in the booming economy of the 1990’s, Karsten advocated greater emphasis on the rescue and protection dimensions of military assignments to improve recruitment efforts. However, the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars interfered with this possibility.

More recently, Hajjar (2014, p. 135) identifies what he calls “a troubling conceptual void in the well-known military theory that applies to armed forces in advanced states.” Hajjar describes a military institutional culture that is evolving from “20th Century Modern” to “21st Century Post-Modern”, in the context of the changing societal culture in which it operates (Hajjar 2014, p. 119). That evolution can be stated generally as moving toward increasing multiculturalism.

Hajjar’s call for the incorporation of an explicit variable pertaining to military internal organizational culture converges on Krebs’ critique that culture as a variable has been overlooked (2009). Hajjar begins his formulation with the culture of the armed forces as an institution by acknowledging that “the warrior identity remains the top orientation” (Hajjar 2014, p. 135). He recognizes the difficulties of accounting for both a societal culture and an internal military institutional culture arise from the “contested, fragmented and coherent, and contradictory and complementary nature” of culture as a concept (Hajjar, p. 119).

Brands as Cultural Signposts

Applying a branding perspective, we suggest the warrior identity may be symbolized as the “Citizen Soldier” discussed earlier, a “signpost” for one pathway to adulthood. Once this symbol of voluntary and temporary sacrifice is acknowledged as a brand, a marketing strategist then realizes its meanings can evolve – dimensions can be added to the sum of perceptions recruits and military service-members alike hold about the role. This can be accomplished by effective marketing communications (Fournier 1998, Sherry 2005). The formerly white male “face” of the citizen soldier can become a range of races, ethnicities and genders. The aggressive dimension of the warrior identity can be tempered by patriotic rescuer and protector elements.

Brand marketing teams understand that consumer experiences with the brand shape their independent evaluations of it. Consumers associate a brand not only with product features, they also link it through cultural processes to status indicators, intangible emotional connections and

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user imagery (Keller 2000, Zaltman 2003). Smart marketers use branding as a strategic tool to manage the images and meanings consumers could associate with a given brand in the context of market and cultural forces. These accumulated meanings among numerous consumers constitutes a perceptual equity that influences their relationships with the brand (Fournier, 1998).

Brands can also be used as ways to express multiple cultural meanings concisely and non-verbally. Current military recruitment marketing, in its focus on self-interested motivations rationally explained, may be overlooking potentially stronger reasons to enlist and stronger ways to communicate them. Understanding which elements are the consistent ones maintained across time as the brand's "essence" and which elements can be adapted to retain its relevance in different historical moments is the task of the marketing researcher and strategist.

Incorporating contemporary culture and subcultures into military recruitment theory poses problems for how recruitment teams plan their strategies and direct their communications. Their situation is that of achieving an effective but also efficient use of research resources to understand what the full set of benefits includes and how it might affect propensities to enlist (Wright-Isak 2017). The "Discover and Verify" approach used by brand marketers offers a practical solution.

Research Design

Rather than extensive mapping of the cultural influences in society and the military, marketers recognize a more direct way to identify which of those complex aspects directly bear on the prospect propensities to enlist. Consumers themselves narrow that universe of possible dimensions included in the term "culture" to those that are personally relevant, providing marketers with a short cut to knowing which elements will affect their decisions. We need to ask *them* to tell us what their perceptions are (Janesick 2000, Zaltman 2003).

Krebs (2009) points out how current recruitment research misses opportunities to find out what possible benefits there *may* be by assuming entirely calculative prospects. Industry brand equity research customarily inventories the consumers' existing perceptions of the brand *without imposing pre-conceived assumptions* (Keller 2000, Sherry 2005, Zaltman 2003). Commercial marketers use exploratory research methods to discover new or counter-intuitive consumer attitudes and behaviors, followed by quantitative verification research.

Krebs (2009) suggests that researchers should explore the possibility of other motivations to enlist. In this paper Study I was designed specifically to accomplish this. Second, he calls for conducting research with those who are familiar with military service rather than with prospects who have not, and may never, serve. Samples in both Study I and Study II accomplish this.

Two-Step Brand Benefits Identification Method: Discover and Verify

Our research consists of an *exploratory study with a small number (n=12) of Millennial combat veterans to discover* what benefits to military service there may be in addition to benefits of the various G.I. Bills, followed by a *quantitative survey with a larger number of military and civilian Millennials (n=63) to verify the relative importance of the discovered benefits*. Study I provided

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opportunities for military-experienced participants to express their own perceptions and insights that might differ from rational-calculative *homo economicus* perspectives.

Study I: Exploratory Research to Discover Other-than-Calculative Benefits

Reasoning that combat veterans would reflect experiences in the broadest spectrum of positive and negative military service situations, we conducted in-depth interviews with twelve Iraq and Afghanistan veterans attending college on their G.I. Bill benefits. The small sample is appropriate for in-depth exploratory purposes (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

Table I Study I Sample Description

Person	Years Served	Military Brand	MOS/Job	Combat Region (2001-Present)	Undergrad Field of Study
Participant 1	3	Army	Infantry	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 2	4	Army	Infantry	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 3	4	Army	Armor Crewman	Iraq/Afghanistan	Business
Participant 4	5	Marines	Communications	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 5	4	Marines	Armor Crewman	Iraq/Afghanistan	History
Participant 6	8	Army	Armor Crewman	Iraq/Afghanistan	Business
Participant 7	4	Army	Communications	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 8	4	Marines	Heavy Artillery	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 9	4	Marines	Infantry	Iraq/Afghanistan	Business
Participant 10	3	Army	Medic	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 11	5	Marines	Infantry	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science
Participant 12	5	Marines	Infantry	Iraq/Afghanistan	Liberal Arts or Science

Study I Research Questions and Interview Procedures. Study I asks two research questions: do enlisted Millennials perceive a broader than tangible spectrum of G.I. Bill benefits from military service, and how do they describe those benefits? An in-depth open-ended interview approach optimized chances of discovering previously unrecognized military service benefits (Janesick 2000 p. 282). Each participant was interviewed three times, yielding 90 hours of interviews. Participants were shown the three questions (below) and encouraged to discuss topics in their own preferred sequence:

- How did you come to enlist in the military?
- What do you see today as the benefits or value of your military service? (Please consider all the benefits to you - during your service, as well as post-service benefits.)
- How is your transition going?

Interview sessions took place with time gaps varying from a few days to 4 months in-between. Participants reported that the three-session schedule allowed them to present details that might not have emerged, but for their reflection between sessions. This also allowed participants to follow-up on their own emergent themes in partnership with their interviewer (Fontana and Frey 2000).

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Study I Observations. The Study I interviews do expand the current spectrum of assumed G.I. Bill service benefits as perceived by millennial service-members. Consistent with the purpose of discovering and describing perceived benefits other than those of the G.I. Bills, themes and examples of the comments that characterize each one are presented here to show how Phase I observations form the basis for the measures used in Phase II.

In their conversations about the value of their military service experiences, participants rarely volunteered the tangible benefits of the G.I. Bill as a motivation to enlist. One veteran described an unexpected usefulness of the G.I. Bill saying it provided justification to family and friends regarding his decision, but it “wasn’t the main reason I enlisted.” Several other participants told us they used the utilitarian items as post-hoc rationales that helped family or friends accept their decision to serve, but said the more important intangible benefits were what prompted their enlistment decision (Participants 1, 4 and 8). This is a retrospective perception that is consistent with other research that observes the desire to do something for their communities is a common feeling among Millennials (Noble et. al. 2009). Although veterans describe the post-service G.I. Bill benefits as valuable, none limited their list to them.

Comments revealed five main benefits themes, all of which emerged sooner later in each veteran’s set of interviews. For each theme, we provide example comments that illustrate the type we included in the theme and provide the basis for the items subsequently tested in Study II.

Self-Discovery. This theme includes development of new skills involving the emergence of previously unrecognized abilities:

“Of course, I have learned skills, and earned a living, but now I know I keep commitments well. Even when...even in difficult situations.” (Participant # 2)

“I became more mature. You learn to take more responsibility for yourself. ... I learned a lot about myself. I had a lot of time to think. I became purposeful. I made to-do lists. I’m in the reserve now and they made me a squad leader. I see myself changing.” (Participant # 3)

Solidarity. The powerful bond among unit members, often strongly, emotionally expressed:

“I hated the Army when I was in, and now I miss it badly.” [When asked why]
“The team, I miss the team.” (Participant # 3)

“[After I was shot] so they tell me I’m goin’ home and I say ‘no way,’ the only way I’m going home is in a box. I started working out when the surgeon didn’t know so I would be able to walk and stay with my unit.” (Participant # 9)

Purpose. A desire for more than self-interested motivation was a benefit derived from numerous opportunities to render important service to others during their military service. Fulfilling these opportunities brought a heightened sense of personal integrity, enriched by a powerful sense of purpose:

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[Of his military service] “I don’t have any delusions that anything will fill that void. But the Secret Service may do it somewhat. What I think it will provide is a sense of greater purpose. There will be a greater meaning to it, a point to what I’ll be doing – even when it’s as boring as standing watch.” (Participant # 6)

“What I miss most in normal civilian life ... I still miss having a true sense of purpose when I wake up every morning. Before the service, I was in college. I didn’t really care, and now I have this sense of determination...” (Participant # 9)

Achievement. Not expressed as individual ambition, but as the satisfaction of excelling beyond one’s previous abilities, often combined with the satisfaction of being a contributing member of a successful team (implicitly earning the respect of their teammates):

“The Army is the closest I can come to a [place where there is] mutual respect that supersedes flaws or differences.” (Participant # 6)

“I may or may not succeed on my own, but as part of a team where I do my part, I can be sure I succeed when the team succeeds.” (Participant # 3)

Expanded knowledge beyond boundaries of childhood familiarities. Increased awareness of life based on a much wider experience of the world, prompted comparisons to how others live outside the U.S., with greater appreciation for “life in America” and the desire to continue actions that will benefit their communities back home.

“It’s weird at times. When someone’s biggest problem is not being able to get the right color cell phone cover, and that’s a tragedy – that blows my mind. I’ve seen people grateful just for fresh water...” (Participant # 4)

Study I Insights: A Broader than Tangible-Calculative Benefit Spectrum. These narratives reveal a broader spectrum of value to military service than is contained in the limited list of tangible items of the various G.I. Bills. Consistent with research by brand marketing scholars, the tangible (monetary) and intangible (aspirational, social, and experiential) benefits (Ostrom 2005) were discussed by these veterans as integral to the multidimensional value of military service. The ways participants described their benefits provide the basis for articulating the variables measured in Study II.

These findings among Millennials were part of a larger cross-generational exploration that included WWII and Korean War as well as Vietnam Era veterans, already published (Wright-Isak 2017). The same pattern of positive value placed by veterans on the altruistic aspects of service was observed among earlier generations who served in some very different historical and societal contexts (Wright-Isak 2017).

Study II: Verifying the Importance of Tangible vs. Intangible Benefits

Study II tests the comparative importance of tangible, self-development and financial (G.I. Bill) benefits of serving, versus intangible, altruistic, social and aspirational benefits using a sample of

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63 millennial service-members and millennial civilians. Study I narratives were used to design a survey instrument that would approximate participants' own terminology (Bernstein 1973).

Study II can be considered a pilot study to ascertain whether there are sufficient differences between the self-interested and altruistic sets of benefits to warrant more thorough quantitative research to re-examine longstanding recruitment approaches.

Measures. The survey presented 15 benefits rotated across the questionnaires to control for sequence effects. Each was rated on its perceived importance to the survey respondent, using a 5 point Likert Scale where 1 = Not at all Important, and 5 = Extremely Important. Congress has modified the original G.I. Bill numerous times over the years. We used the three themes common to several previous G.I. Bills used to operationalize their tangible benefits: tuition and support money for college, health care benefits and home mortgage funding or small business loan opportunities.

Survey Sample. The survey sample included a civilian subsample (33 undergraduate management class students) and a military subsample (30 active US Marine Corps Millennial Reservists). Military respondents were asked the perceived importance of each item as a benefit of their own military service; civilian students were asked the importance of each as a probable benefit (imagined by them) of serving in the military. Thus, the survey measured *perceptions* of the benefits of serving.

Study II Criteria for Interpretation. Due to its small sample size, Study II is a preliminary test of whether the intangible benefits to military service are as important as the tangible ones. Because of the longevity of previous calculative benefits assumptions in recruitment planning (Krebs 2009), all hypotheses of Study II assert that a finding of equal importance of Tangibles and Intangibles calls for revision of this assumption.

Finding intangible benefits to be of equal importance among those who have served would encourage future scholars of recruitment marketing to include measurement of intangibles, especially altruistic benefits in their research. Finding similarity of the perceived benefits of serving among both civilians and service members in the Phase II Quantitative Verification study would indicate that communicating this broader spectrum might increase marketing communications persuasiveness to civilian millennials.

Study II Analysis in Four Blocks. We analyzed the benefits data in four blocks of importance ratings, averaged across the total sample and within the military and civilian subsamples.

Chart A Benefits Analysis Block

Block 1. Tangible - Utilitarian Benefits (3 items)	G.I. Bill Education Benefits VA or G.I. Bill Health Benefits G.I. Bill Other Benefits (e.g. Home or Small Business loans)
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<u>Block 2. Intangible – Personal Development Benefits (7 items)</u>	Discovered new abilities I didn't know I had Earned/Deserved respect Did a lot of growing up Expanded the familiar world of childhood Improved negative family circumstances Had a hell of a lot of fun Fulfilled a family tradition
<u>Block 3. Intangible – Altruistic Benefits (5 items)</u>	Have the satisfaction of knowing I served my country Belonged to something that has significance Belonged to a community that mattered Found/made friendships of real importance to me Gained a sense of purpose greater than self-interest
<u>Block 4. Total Intangible Benefits</u>	<u>(Combines 2 and 3 above into a single Intangible variable)</u>

Block averages were t-tested for differences in levels of importance due to the small sizes of the sample and subsamples (n=63 total) to accept or reject the following hypotheses:

Chart B Block Analysis Hypotheses

Variable 1 vs. Variable 4	Ho1a – That among Millennials (full sample) Total Intangible benefits receive equal importance as Tangible benefits (null). [Variable 1 Tangible vs. Variable 4 Total Intangible] Ho1b – That Tangible and Total Intangible benefits are equal in importance among military Millennials compared to civilian Millennials (null). [Variable 1 Tangible vs. Variable 4 Total Intangible]
Variable 1 vs. Variable 2	Ho2a – That among Millennials (full sample) Tangible benefits and Intangible-Personal Development benefits are equal in importance (null). [Variable 1 vs. Variable 2] Ho2b – That Tangible and Intangible-Personal Development benefits are equal in importance among military Millennials compared to civilian Millennials (null). [Variable 1 vs. Variable 2]
Variable 1 vs. Variable 3	Ho3a – That among Millennials (full sample) Tangible benefits and Altruistic-Intangible benefits are equal in importance (null). [Variable 1 vs. Variable 3] Ho3b – That Tangible and Altruistic-Intangible benefits are equal in importance among military Millennials compared to civilian Millennials (null). [Variable 1 vs. Variable 3]

The sample data includes scores assigned by military and civilian respondents (n = 63) to the perceived importance of fifteen benefits ($B_j, j = 1, \dots, 15$). The respondents assigned a higher whole number in the interval 1 – 5 when a benefit is perceived to be of higher value (greater importance). The fifteen benefits were divided into four composite measures – tangible (T), personal intangible (P), altruistic intangible (A), and total intangible (I).

Each composite score was normalized by the number of component benefits to maintain a consistent 1 – 5 scale of measurement so that meaningful tests of significance of the relative importance of T, P, A and I can be conducted. The composite benefit measures were constructed

as follows
$$T_i = \frac{1}{3} \sum_{j=1}^3 B_{ij}; P_i = \frac{1}{7} \sum_{j=4}^{10} B_{ij}; A_i = \frac{1}{5} \sum_{j=10}^{15} B_{ij}; \text{and, } I_i = \frac{1}{12} \sum_{j=4}^{15} B_{ij} .$$

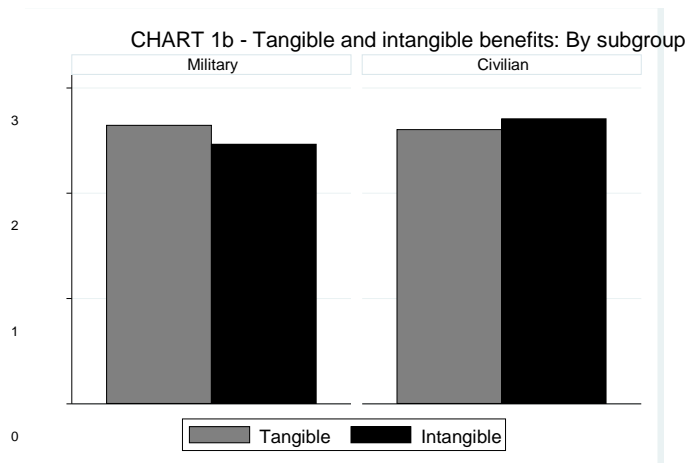
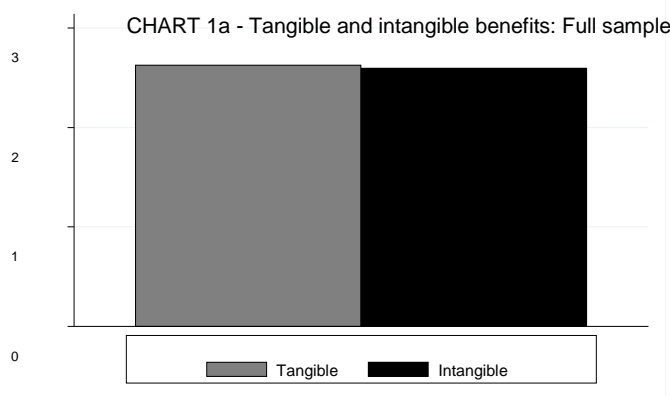
Observations

Tables 1, 2 and 3 display the block averages for each of the two variables tested among the total sample of Millennials on the first row of data. Then in each of the next two rows we show the averages of the two variables, first within the military subsample and then within civilian subsample. Two graphs illustrating test results for each pair of hypotheses follows each table.

Table 1 Study II – Tangible vs. Total Intangible benefits among Millennials

Group	Average score		H₀: Tangible = Intangible
	<u>Tangible</u>	<u>Intangible</u>	
Full sample	2.62	2.59	Accept (<i>p</i> = 0.85)
Military	2.64	2.46	Accept (<i>p</i> = 0.48)
Civilian	2.60	2.70	Accept (<i>p</i> = 0.62)
H₀: Military = Civilian		Accept (<i>p</i> = 0.91)	Accept (<i>p</i> = 0.29)

Table 1 Study II Analysis: Reading across the rows, among the full sample of Millennials, shows that Tangible and Intangible benefits of military service are rated as important as one another by civilians and military respondents alike. This is true within the military and the civilian subsamples separately considered. Thus, both Ho1a and Ho1b are upheld.

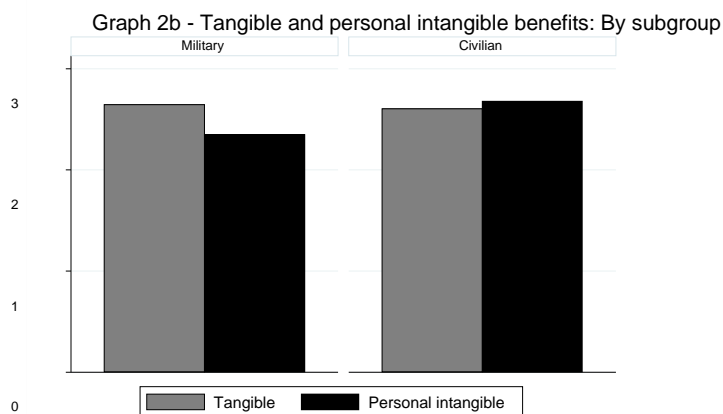
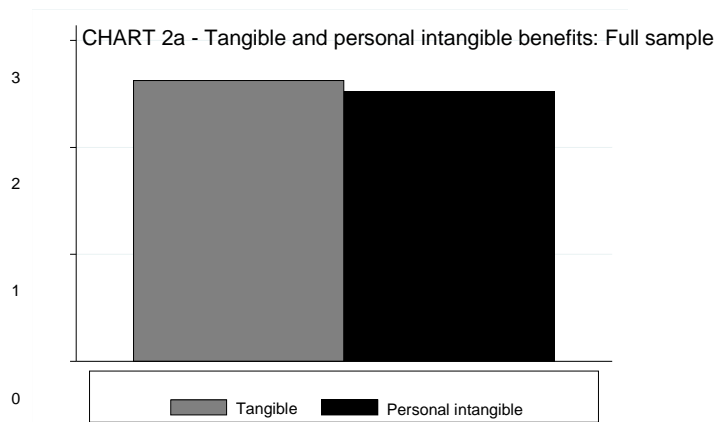


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Table 2 Study II –Tangible vs. Personal Intangible benefits among Millennials

Group	Average score		<u>H₀: Tangible = Intangible</u>
	<u>Tangible</u>	<u>Personal intangible</u>	
Full sample	2.62	2.52	Accept (p = 0.54)
Military	2.64	2.35	Accept (p = 0.24)
Civilian	2.60	2.68	Accept (p = 0.73)
H₀: Military = Civilian	Accept (p= 0.91)	Reject (p = 0.15)	

Table 2 Study II Analysis: Ho2a is upheld – the full sample of Millennials rates the Intangible-Personal benefits to be equally important as the Tangible benefits. And Ho2b is also upheld: Personal Development benefits of military service are as important as Tangible G. I. Bill benefits to both Military and Civilian groups of Millennials.

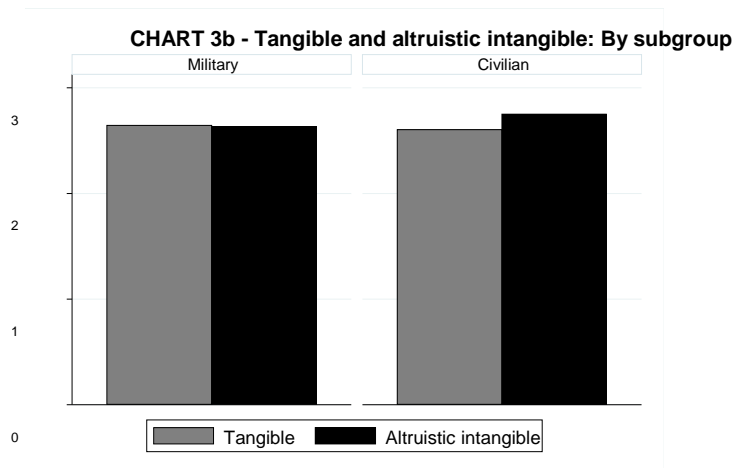
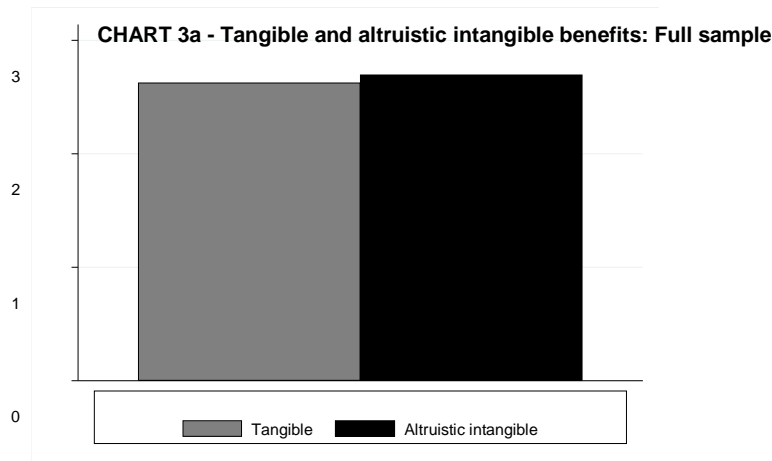


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Table 3 Study II –Tangible vs. Altruistic Intangible benefits among Millennials

Group	Average score		<u>H₀: Tangible = Intangible</u>
	<u>Tangible</u>	<u>Altruistic intangible</u>	
Full sample	2.62	2.69	Accept (p = 0.96)
Military	2.64	2.63	Accept (p = 0.97)
Civilian	2.60	2.75	Accept (p = 0.53)
H₀: Military = Civilian	Accept (p = 0.91)	Accept (p = 0.67)	

Table 3 Study II Analysis: When we compare the Altruistic-Intangibles variable to Tangibles, the full sample rates them as comparably important. The accompanying bar chart indicates there may be a slightly greater importance assigned to the Altruistic-Intangible block than the Tangible block, but not at a statistically significant level. When we make within-subsample comparisons, this difference is also not statistically significant. Thus, H₀3a and H₀3b are upheld: Among both civilian and military Millennials the Altruistic benefits of service are seen as equal or even greater in importance than the Tangible G.I. Bill benefits.



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Further Analysis: In Table 1, we observe a small but noteworthy difference in the importance ratings of Intangible block (Variable 4) when the ratings of civilians (2.70) to those of military respondents are compared (2.46). This difference was tested and when we found weak evidence for the significance of the difference, components of Variable 4 were examined and tested separately.

There is somewhat stronger support for the Ho that civilians place somewhat more importance on Personal-Development items than military do. In Table 2 the difference between civilian importance of Intangible Personal-Intangible (2.68) and military importance (2.35) is significant at the 85% confidence interval. Recall that both military and civilian subsamples place equal or greater importance of these Intangible benefits over the Tangible ones.

We found no significant difference between civilian and military Millennials when comparing the importance of the Altruistic-Intangible variable; for both, it is equally as important as the Tangible variable.

Summary of Findings/Conclusions

Before beginning the two studies we asserted that a finding of comparable importance of intangible-altruistic and self-interested-tangible benefits would prompt a call for revision of military recruitment theory and practice. These data do support the idea that there is an unrecognized broader perceived spectrum of benefits. Study I discovered benefits beyond the calculative, supporting Krebs' argument that allowing respondents to describe their own experiences might do so. Study II verified their perceived importance sufficiently to encourage a larger and more comprehensive investigation.

In particular, the *altruistic* intangible benefits need to be more specifically delineated and their enlistment-motivating importance more fully investigated. A future study would use a larger sample stratified to include a more diverse population more closely approximating the population of recruitment prospects the military is targeting in its research and marketing communications strategies.

The challenge posed by these data to current theory and practice provides insights for military and branding theory, indicating that a full spectrum of benefits is yet to be developed. It informs other areas of benefits research by indicating the interrelatedness of self-development and altruistic coupled with the importance of distinguishing the two as separate entities. These findings also prompt recognition of the methodological utility of the two-step discovery and verification approach in situations where brand benefit unknowns are likely (e.g. new brands or long-established brands in changing social-cultural environments).

A future Study II conducted with a large random sample, selected from today's transitioning veterans, and an appropriately stratified civilian sample, would offer greater certainty that the observations of Study I do characterize Millennials' perceptions of military service as well as more thorough insights into their enlistment motivations (including hopes or expectations). In addition such a study could investigate the Citizen Soldier appeal and its relevance for each of the service branches. Finally, such studies should be designed to measure branch brand perceptual equities to provide a basis for better matching of individual prospects' motivations and expectations with the branch most likely to fulfill them.

Implications

This study and the conclusions we draw are not limited to the U. S. pluralistic culture (including the Citizen Soldier meme) or the current societal view of the military as an American institution. This research occurred at a time when the military is one of the most respected institutions in society. Since WW II it has provided a “test kitchen” for integrations of civilian citizens formerly unequal in terms of race, class, gender and sexual orientation.

After the Vietnam War U.S. society took 30 years to evolve in its attitudes, finally successfully separating the politics of war from the commitments of voluntary enlistees. In the Iraq-Afghanistan War most Americans respect and care about the G.I., despite a diversity of attitudes toward war in general and this war in particular.

International democracies, most with current all-volunteer forces, have distinct military histories and military-civilian cultural symbols and memes, and face similar tasks of persuasion to enlist. Marketing communications for any of them could benefit by the Discover and Verify approach illustrated in the U.S. case. For all, we suggest the following:

- Revisit current recruitment strategies, especially messaging context and use of symbols. In the Discovery Phase I, design research to uncover and explore the relevant national and cultural symbols contained in themes like patriotism, citizenship rights and obligations, national democratic identity and the challenges of personal coming-of age transitions of enlistment prospects. Explore how prospects understand their societal environment, making sure to explore aspirations, hopes and ideals they may see expressed in cultural symbols. Explore the evolution of such symbols in their generation-specific relevance and meaning.
- In analyzing the rich contextual data that result from exploratory research, develop and pre-test social-attitudinal measures that can be used in Phase II Verify research. Pay special attention to elements of voluntarism, desire for commitment, desire to contribute beyond self-interest, and admiration for protector and rescuer or “builder” roles.
- Use the verify phase of research to identify appeal and importance of various motivators, and conceptually mapping the perceived meanings attached to symbols and cultural memes among subgroups in the prospect generation. Each nation may have different subgroups. For example, in the U.S. women, various gender definitions, racial and ethnic and class dimensions all should be included. Each can be expected to share some meanings in common but each group will also have differences in embracing specific symbols and meanings.

Each is likely to have differences in their perceptions of the appeal of military service. Identifying what is shared and what is different allows for development of effective overarching messages integrated with specific sub-group messaging conveyed by integrated marketing communications (IMC) campaigns.

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