ANATOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDRAISING IN CANADA

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Abstract

Throughout history, fundraising campaigns have made a significant difference in the communities they work within, for the causes and initiatives that matter to their donors. Looking within Canada, we have one of the largest and most vibrant not-for-profit sectors, including charities supporting the arts, environmental protection, professional associations, health and education (Hall, Barr, Easwaramoorthy, Sokolowski & Salamon, 2005). To support these services and campaigns, Canadians donated approximately $10.6 billion in 2020 to charitable organizations across the country, but this is decreasing every year (Government of Canada, 2022). The potential then for a more systematic approach in profiling is critical to success, allowing for a more targeted approach to individuals for increased fundraising success and measurement overtime (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

With over $22 billion dollars being donated online in 2010, an increase from around $7 billion dollars in 2006, online giving represents a significant portion of the fundraising industry in the United States and continues to grow every year worldwide (Castillo, et al., 2014). Within these large gifts there are not just large-scale philanthropic donations, but in addition there are many smaller donations and community drives that contribute to the health of the philanthropic industry source. Fundraising in online communities creates a field where “equally important as the club of billionaires is to the future of philanthropy, so too are the contributions Americans of modest means channel through mass appeals that have so often worked in sync with large donations” (Zunz, 2012, p. 298-299).

The key focus of this research is that identification, relationship and social capital influence supportive behaviours for any not-for-profit, with a focus in this work on post-secondary institutions in Canada. Social media data was scrapped from Instagram and X accounts from a select group of Universities in Canada, and a data analysis was then applied used Python and VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary for sEntiment Reasoning) to understand sentiment, opinion and popularity to review the success of each accounts content. The argument presented within this work suggests that (1) marketing and communications practices are as important to not-for-profit organizations as they are in for profit organizations, and that this remains an area that it is a field of fundraising and communications practice that remains underserved, (2) that the factors that influence relationship in the alumni and student stakeholder groups are not utilized in communications strategy, specifically in social media groups and online communication, and (3) identify five potential strategies for communications success in fundraising and long-term post-secondary success.

Dedication/Acknowledgements

The best dissertation is a finished one - Terry Flynn

I came to the path of education later in life than others may, and I have a wonderful group of mentors and supportive leaders around me who have continued to spark a love of learning and reminding me that I **CAN** in fact do this. From the first day of my master's at McMaster University, Dr. Alex Sévigny has guided me, supported me, and continued to challenge my thinking, while also reminding me to keep pushing through. Dr. Sévigny, you are one of a kind and the most positive influence in my career and life. Thank you for continuing to believe in me, even in moments where I stopped believing in myself. I will forever be grateful for your mentorship through the last few years, and I hope this dissertation doesn't mark the end of learning from you for the years ahead.

Despite all my fears and nature to avoid unknowns, I began my PhD at York University and worried immensely I would never find an equal community to what I had experienced at McMaster. I was older, had children, and found myself in graduate classes with students who had very different goals than I did. Within this strange place I found the most welcoming and hard-working person I have ever met. Dr. Anne MacLennan, you are the rarest of finds. You are a strong leader and academic who also understands the human element of working through all of this with a family and full-time job. When I felt I had to hide having those other things with other faculty, you embraced it and have helped me sort through the challenging elements of creating time to get things done. I don't know how you do all that you do, but I will continue to try and meet your expectations and standards.

Being the first person in my family to attend post-secondary school meant a lot to my parents and grandparents. Finishing my undergrad alone felt like an accomplishment for us all, and certainly set me on a traditional path to success that equaled what my family would have dreamt it to be. To tell my parents that I would do my Master's while being pregnant with my second child and working full-time, and then to tell them that I was quitting my stable full-time job, with a pension and insurance to pursue a PhD the same time my youngest started kindergarten, likely seemed crazy. However, they supported me every step of the way, with something that they didn't totally understand. To Mike and Cheryl (Dad and Mom), thank you. Thank you for letting me make my own choices, that may have seemed wrong at times, but you let me succeed or fail on my own. Mom, this is especially for you! I have many things from you, and although I know you didn't finish school where you could have, I hope this shows you what you have also accomplished in life.

My dearest partner Clay. To have found a man that supports and values my goals as much as his own is a special thing. At a time when I thought I had to do everything on my own, you came and showed me that I can in fact have an equal partner who will take on things so I can accomplish whatever I dream of. You see me beyond being a mother, or partner, and you see all the best of me. I know this is a long one to read, so I will provide you with an audiobook to summarize. Now you can finally tell your mom you got a Dr.

To my babies, Bryson and Avery, I hope that this shows you that you can do hard things, and that whatever you decide to do in life, you should always give it your best. I have always taken such pride in being your mom, and I thank God every day for giving me you two, the greatest gift and trusting me with the most wonderful children. May a love for learning anything, in whatever topic excites you, always exist, no matter what age you are, even when you are old like me. And now Bryson, you can finally stop asking me if I am a doctor yet! Yes, it took some time, but we got there together, when maybe others thought I couldn’t make it.

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INTRODUCTION

Aim and Contribution

Motivating people to give money and successful fundraising work is strongly tied to the relationships and the perceived happiness donors and potential donors have with an organization. This relationship and happiness with donors become particularly important for universities and other post-secondary institutions, where the junction between traditional fundraising, public relations, and social capital, becomes important for connection with alumni. The work at these institutions is then well supported by communications and fundraising professionals, who are working to capture the attention of their diverse alumni audience.

The happiness that donors feel in giving provides a unique opportunity to improve donor relationships and expand a donor network. This is similar to the work by Julie O'Neil (2007), who found a strong relationship between the happiness generated by a donation an individual gives to an organization and then, in turn, the subsequent desire to recommend that organization and other donations to others. However, O'Neil's (2007) work was based on a more traditional understanding of donating and has not yet been tested within the digital space for which this work presents a strategy.

In the last decade, a growing number of digital tools and platforms have developed for fundraisers to measure success and communication with donors and potential donors. This includes platforms that manage variations of crowdsourced funding, where users can share a fundraising initiative and complete an entire campaign digitally, through their own networks. I believe that in understanding the dynamics of our changing online communities, as explored by Gruzd, Jacobson, Wellman, and Mai (2016), fundraisers and others working in not-for-profits, could significantly influence and improve fundraising models with these new platforms for campaigns.

The research presented here will specifically focus on Canadian colleges and universities, which, as explained by Hall, et al (2005), receive funding from both the federal and provincial governments, totaling an average of almost $20,000 per student each year (Dehaas, 2011). With governments at all levels facing tighter budget constraints, especially since the COVID pandemic, colleges and universities are seeing a decrease in the amount of dollars they receive from the government, pressuring them to look for more private donations in an effective way. Similarly, universities and colleges have been appealing to the federal and provincial government in the last year to change the rules on tuition freezes and to increase funding models as they have begun to see deficits year over year, including in the case of Laurentian University, going into insolvency (Cayouette, 2023). It seems then a likely opportunity for institutions to implement a stronger communications and fundraising strategy to ensure financial prosperity and continued success for the institution in the immediate. This work does not however suggest that governments should not improve their financial support for institutions, an important consideration in the Canadian landscape, both for academic freedoms and sustainability.

The argument presented in this research indicates that; (1) marketing and communications practices are as important to not-for-profit organizations as they are in for profit organizations, and that this remains an area that it is a field of fundraising and communications practice that is underserved overall (both from historical and perspective reasons as discussed), (2) that the factors that influence relationships in the alumni and student stakeholder groups with an institution are not utilized effectively in communications strategies, specifically in social media groups and online communication, and finally (3) by identifying and utilizing the suggested five strategies for communications success in fundraising, organizations will be able to increase long-term post-secondary success in fundraising and therefore overall success for any institution.

These five considerations for best practices to leverage social capital in fundraising for success include: creating and cultivating authentic relationships, engaging in your community and their activities, fostering the power of social media, engaging with influencers and ambassadors of your brand, and focusing on relationships. This work focuses on the research discussing organization identification, relationship and social capital, and how they influence supportive behaviours for any not-for-profit. Each of these areas are reviewed with a focus on the postsecondary institutional landscape in Canada.

This work builds connections between Hon and Grunig's, *Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations* (1998), as well as McAlexander and Koenig's (2014) measurement of marketing for donor relationships, to improve strategy and social media engagement. With a focus based on communications and social media strategy that can work on evoking emotions about an organization, with the goal to motivate individuals to give to an institution.

This work shows that the size and scale of many institutions should present an opportunity for a strong social media and fundraising strategy based on the resources available in staff and knowledge, but instead, the siloed nature of many institutions means that many are not able to successfully execute a cohesive social media strategy for relationship management and ultimately donation success. The work presented here also demonstrates the importance in considering relationships with donors and potential future donors, who may not have financial means to give at that specific moment in time, but may look for other ways to contribute, or donate in future similar to the work found in the Canada Helps Giving Report (2022).

Having worked in fundraising for several years, it became clear that the traditional means of identifying donors and potential donors would not be sustainable in a digital landscape and was challenging to scale with donors expecting more from each charity, compared to what the private sector can offer in terms of content delivery. Long held tools in fundraising like traditional mail campaigns, email campaigns and events only help not-for-profits with a limited number of donors, can be costly, and with changing addresses and limitations on emails through laws like the Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL), this limited number becomes even more difficult to maintain.

Through this research I have explored the connection between social media channels and engagement by various university channels in connection with donor stewardship. This research applied the factors presented by Hon and Grunig (1999) and McAlexander and Koenig's (2014) work as a guide for communications tactics as cultivation tools; and Waters (2009), who detailed the increased importance organizations are placing on the stewardship of all donors, and the impact of digital communications strategies. I argue that institutions are currently not utilizing the tools and knowledge available to foster the relationships with their communities, and that the potential for reputational strength are underutilized, creating space for a more effective strategy and asset moving forward.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF FUNDRAISING

Think of giving not only as a duty but as a privilege – John D. Rockefeller (Charnow, 1998)

Colonial Settlements and Philanthropy

From the earliest colonial settlements to the present day, philanthropic efforts and fundraising campaigns have provided the necessary resources and support for various causes, institutions, political campaigns and community initiatives, all for what they believed to be the common good (Bremner, 1988). The history of fundraising in North America lays an important foundation for the direction and trajectory of the practice of fundraising's future (Oliński & Szamrowski, 2018). Throughout this chapter there are American and Canadian examples provided, and I believe that by including both there is an opportunity to review how the field of fundraising was shaped in North America overall. By tracing fundraising's evolution from the early charitable acts of settlers to the sophisticated fundraising strategies of modern times in Canada and the United States, this work will present a review and solutions and strategies concerning the future of fundraising in the years ahead.

The definition of fundraising can be applied in many forms and exists in a variety of relationships throughout history. Fundraising, as defined by many, is the act of soliciting money or other resources from individuals, foundations, and organizations for a particular cause (i.e., Bremner, 1988; Oliński & Szamrowski, 2018; Yang, 2019). Historically, fundraising has been a crucial component of many charitable and philanthropic endeavors over the course of history (Kassim et al., 2019). Donations and financial support continue to be true for modern fundraising organizations, with the support from government varying over time, which will be discussed further within this chapter.

Without these fundraising efforts throughout history, many of the world's most significant humanitarian initiatives, arts and culture works, and social justice movements would not have been possible (Kassim et al., 2019). From the construction of places of worship, theatres, hospitals and schools, to financing scientific research or promoting social change movements, fundraising has been instrumental in providing financial support for a wide range of causes and initiatives for centuries (Yang, 2019). Much of this chapter will discuss different examples of the causes and initiatives, but ultimately the success of any not-for-profit organization relies on connecting with their communities.

As communities and more formal relationships grew in North America, fundraising and the work of raising funds for initiatives continued to grow and develop. In the 18th and 19th centuries, local communities came together to support the construction of infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, and schools (Lindahl, 2010). Fundraising events, including auctions, fairs, and social gatherings, became popular ways to generate funds and to support community initiatives, with a shared cause and goal (Gordon, 1998). These events not only helped raise money but also fostered a sense of community cohesion and solidarity, a greater sense of belonging and a shared focus for those that participated (Gordon, 1998). These smaller events grew out of connections and relationships with individuals in local communities, offering a chance to connect around a cause, but also to have time together with like-minded individuals.

The biggest consideration in fundraising, particularly in the 17th and 18th century, centred around the religious beliefs, imperatives and desires of religious communities. In the early years of North America's settlement, fundraising was predominantly driven by religious motives with the pilgrims and Puritans (Yang et al., 2019). The Pilgrims and Puritans, who arrived in the 17th century sought financial support from their communities in order to establish churches, build schools, and support missionaries (Gordon, 1998). The pilgrims made donating a critical component to being a valued member of the community and began a relationship with tax incentives for donations (Russo, 2023). These early fundraising efforts relied on personal connections and appeals to religious duty, with leaders often delivering impassioned sermons to inspire generosity from their community (Russo, 2023).

This type of connection with the church and donations has continued for many centuries, and various religions have assigned giving to the church as a fundamental requirement to being a good religious member of their church. As Sarah Koenig (2016) writes, the relationship between the “Almighty God” and the “Almighty Dollar” in financing religious organizations has always had a close tie. In the post-civil war era, many religious leaders continued to share messages and communication with their communities aimed to solicit donations, and in some cases, guilt their congregation into giving money. The image shown below shows an example of this type of communication tied with religious connection by the Young People's Missionary Movement, titled *How Americans Spend Their Money* (Gillespie, 1854), showing how heathens will perish, as they explain, if they accumulate money rather than giving to the church.

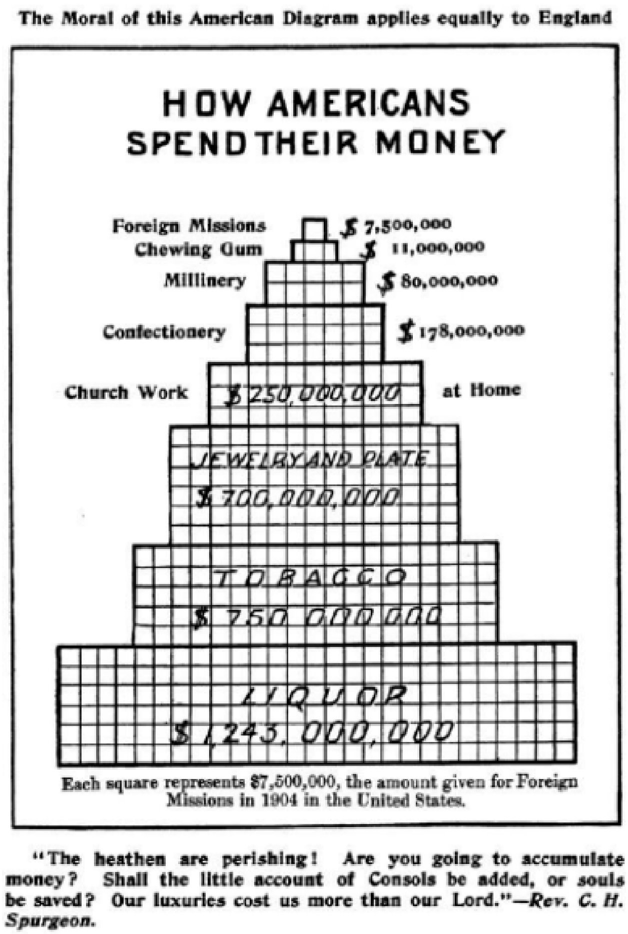

Figure 1: How American's Spend Their Money

This continued effort by religious organizations happened throughout the civil war, World War One, and World War Two, where during this time women began to take a more important role in fundraising, as more men were sent to war. Women in North America began to lead missionaries and community chests that were working to support war efforts, with a focus on secular organizations and causes (Goins & McDonald, 1998). This time period also marked the start of schools and educational institutions that reflected the values and beliefs of the religious organizations and churches within various communities. For example, the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, in the United States was established in 1842 by a priest and the congregation of the Holy Cross (University of Notre Dame, 2023). Similarly in Canada, in 1827 the University of Toronto was established, and was originally controlled by the Church of England (University of Toronto, 2023).

This time of religious giving and donations made by individuals with a diversity of wealth for the greater good of their communities continued for many years, with lasting impacts in a variety of areas. As North American communities grew and expanded in size and diversity, so too did the need for collective fundraising efforts for various initiatives and causes, more specifically during the Great Depression in the 1930's (Simpson & Willer, 2015). Overall, the greatest successes in fundraising throughout history occurs when there is a larger need and crisis that a community is able to gather support around.

In Canada in the 1800s and early 1900s, philanthropy was similarly concentrated within a smaller group of wealthy individuals and families (Olson & Thornton, 2011). Montreal, as an example, had a powerful Protestant community that followed similar patterns to the United States, and so they had shared religious approaches to giving within the community (MacLennan, 1987). The religious approach to giving meant that fundraising relied on those wealthy individuals donating and supporting causes that aligned with their values. The input then from those individuals, on the causes that received support, and the contributions made in not just Montreal, but across Canada can be tracked throughout history in a variety of ways, including as an example, the naming of buildings for large donors (MacLennan, 1987).

As the Great Depression began, the need for community chests and organizations that were central to the needs of many people in a community, continued to grow. Thus, a time began when philanthropy went from the acts of fundraising stemming from a love for fellow people in a smaller form, to what Salamon (1992) describes as "private giving of time and valuable resources for public purposes" (p. 10). The Great Depression was a longer sustaining challenge for many communities and because the need was not temporary, this required larger scale campaigns and organizations to fulfill a specific need (MacLennan, 1987). The establishment of these organizations became permanent and even more important to each community during the Second World War.

Individual philanthropy specifically, will be the focus of this essay, and although originally studied under social work, more modern views of philanthropy look at this concept from legal, communications and business perspectives. Philanthropy is something that goes beyond any contractual obligation and focuses more on private giving for public good, where others might benefit or be helped for a greater good (Daly 2012, Simpson & Willer, 2015). Philanthropy then becomes an extension of fundraising, whereas Russo (2023) describes, philanthropy became "a voluntary action for the public good through voluntary action, voluntary association, and voluntary giving" (p.18), by those with wealth. Wealthy families and those with significant individual wealth began to make donations and announcements of donations, both influencing others to donate, and to continue making significant impacts on initiatives important to their beliefs.

With the continuing changes to income for individuals throughout this period, including the Great Depression of the 1930's, governments struggled to meet the immediate needs of many communities. As a result, charities became the resource for many individuals who found themselves struggling, and this only further solidified charity's role and importance in many societies (MacLennan, 1987). In the 19th and 20th century the emergence of larger philanthropic institutions in North America began, as fundraising and the professionalization of the work became a bigger form of business and a fundamental component to communities and their successes (Lehmann & Keller, 2006, MacLennan, 1987).

The establishment of many organizations and the systems within society that supported these organizations became entrenched in my communities. Institutions that are still critical components to society today, such as the YMCA, the American Red Cross, many large educational institutions, like the ones mentioned earlier and the Salvation Army were founded during this period in the United States of America and later Canada (Klein & Yogi, 2022). Fundraising efforts for these organizations were characterized by a combination of grassroots campaigns and large-scale donation drives, built to strategically target the affluent members of a society or community (Mauss, 2000). There is significant literature formed around the nature of giving in a society, where donations can be framed as a form of altruism, self-interest, and reciprocity (Comte, 1973, Mauss, 2000; Ryan, 2013, Smith, 2010).

In the United States and Canada, during the 19th century and early part of the 20th century fundraising was primarily done through churches or religious institutions (Krause, 2014; MacLennan 1984, 1987). These institutions played a vital role in both social and charitable work, and fundraising helped them to finance their activities and expand their reach to wider audiences across the country and the World (Lindahl, 2010). As the country grew and diversified, secular organizations such as universities and hospitals began to engage in fundraising with a focus on increasing the accessibility of education and healthcare (Yinchun & Wei, 2022). Fundraising efforts played a critical role in the expansion of these institutions and their work, and helped provide resources to individuals who otherwise would have been unable to access these services (Yinchun & Wei, 2022).

By reviewing the larger philanthropic institutions and the systematic approach to philanthropy, it becomes important to consider the concept of giving. Giving and gifting donations by wealthy individuals to an organization, who seek to address social problems through organized philanthropy, is an important consideration in the more modern approach to fundraising. Additionally, tax incentives and financial benefits to giving continue to offer a value proposition from the government, which also indicated overall societal importance on donations (MacLennan, 1984, Russo, 2023). Similarly, as Fennell (2002) describes, gifting goes beyond being a straight transactional opportunity, to one that offers other types of benefits, one that throughout history has continued to be a key consideration to giving.

As individual wealth continued to grow and, in many cases, became concentrated for some families in North America, many of these families began the establishment of foundations to decide where to donate their wealth. These individual foundations were where collections of larger wealth, both from an individual or a smaller group or family came together with interests and causes they supported (Fleishman, 2009; Fosdick, 2017;

Klein & Yogi, 2022). For example, the Chicago Annenberg Challenge, a now famous fundraising campaign for the Chicago public school systems, began in the 20th century, and resulted in $500 million in donations directed by one foundation, started by Walter Annenberg, aimed to improve local education reform (Fleishman, 2009). This is just one example of many individual foundations that have developed over the last three decades that have continued to make a difference in improving communities and initiatives around a variety of causes.

Specifically, in the years that followed the Civil War in America, there was a select group of families that controlled the greatest percentage of wealth in the country (Harvey, Maclean, Gordon & Shaw, 2011). Families, such as the Rockefellers, Carnegies, the Fords, who were worth billions, and more recently the Gates, have donated large amounts of money to higher education and cultural growth in communities across the United States of America (Acs & Phillips, 2002). This allowed them to take donating money from an act of charity to an act of philanthropy and created a time where their social capital influenced others in their network to give as well (Harvey, et al., 2011). The donations that these families made in the late 1800s and early 1900s changed many aspects of American life, by turning their large fortunes into public assets, but also by establishing key components of what is considered philanthropy today (Harvey, et al., 2011).

Following this period of individual or family philanthropy for the wealthy, came the start of mass philanthropy or a people's philanthropy, "that engaged the large American middle and working classes in their own welfare" (Zunz, 2012, p. 44). This period created a culture of giving, where people felt compelled to give because of mass appeals for a variety of organizations for greater causes locally and across the country (Harvey, et al., 2011). The late 19th and early 20th centuries also brought significant social and political reforms in North America (Russo, 2023).

Like the earlier discussion in this dissertation around the Great Depression in North America, many organizations had significant impact in their communities because of a larger scale issue impacting the community at large. For example, by the start of World War Two, a significant number of Americans were contributing money to humanitarian efforts related to the war in Europe, in what Olivier Zunz (2012) qualifies as “the definitive breakthrough in mass philanthropy” (p. 57). Notably, larger scale issues and struggles continue to be important moments in the history of philanthropy and fundraising, each of the World Wars, Civil War, and the spread of diseases are included as examples throughout this essay.

As examples continue of this type of collective work by a community during a time of larger turmoil, it is also important to observe the changes in the government and governmental services, and societal beliefs as impacted by these organizations. This type of civic-minded society establishes a level of commitment to community and to the collective good within society that continued long after the war (Burlingame, 2004). Fundraising during this period in history became a vital tool for various social movements, including women's suffrage, labor rights, and civil rights (Gordon, 1998). This also marks an important time when women solidified their position as strong fundraisers and leaders in not-for-profits, similar to the start of this work during the time of World War One.

Mass appeals and large-scale campaigns were fueled by community fundraising movements, where local organizations began “community chests” to increase funds and grassroots fundraising initiatives to help causes important to a more local community (Morris, 2015). One of the first mass campaigns recorded was in the fight against tuberculosis in the United States and Canada, where a large-scale fundraising mobilization began around one single cause (Warner, 1908; McCuaig, 1979). These campaigns around tuberculosis in each community took place with the help of hospitals, churches, schools and smaller community organizations, as volunteers locally joined together to raise funds for one central cause, and by 1915 there were estimated to be 500,000 people working and volunteering for this single campaign (Copp 1974; Lagemann, 1992).

After the success of the campaign like that in the fight against tuberculosis in the United States and Canada, charities began assigning people to go door-to-door with volunteers, community members and leaders, as well as charity professionals, to get contributions for a variety of humanitarian causes that were deemed of interest to the community (Bishop & Green, 2008). This continued for many years with varied success for organizations across North America, for a variety of different causes, including the successful work done by the United Way, and the American Red Cross during this time (Gordon, 1998; MacLennan 1996; Tillotson 2009). This work and grassroots initiatives allowed Americans of modest means to continue to give what they could, influenced by the cause and the requests they received (Bishop & Green, 2008).

President Hoover's Research Committee on Social Trends in 1933 (Mitchell), noted that giving and donation was a part of habit and tradition for Americans. The report went on to say that giving for public good was predictable and not related to income, tax rates or external circumstances, which is further supported by mass giving surviving through the worst days of the Depression in the 1930's (Mitchell, 1933). Considering that, as noted by John Price Jones in the first issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly* dating back to 1937:

> mass giving had withstood the worst of the depression. It had become a routine part of American life. While public opinion determined the success of any mass campaign, it affected the choice of a philanthropy but not the underlying philanthropic impulse. (p. 147)

Fundraising then became identified as a significant tool for political campaigns across Canada and the United States, as political candidates relied on donations to finance their campaigns and the resources necessary for successful political bids, including for Presidential candidates (Reckhow & Snyder, 2014). The success of this work in political environments led to the increased use of direct mail campaigns in all areas of philanthropy, as well as other efforts to mobilize support and raise funds for candidates and causes across greater geographic areas (Pfau, 1990). These tools for direct mail and mobilization across a broad community have continued to be used in common fundraising practice for a variety of causes and campaigns, with varied success as discussed later in this research (Pfau, 1990).

The 1950s also marks the start of the professionalization of fundraising, as organizations saw the value of creating strategy and understanding social influence in connecting with donors and potential donors in their communities and across the country (Burlingame, 2004). As Zunz (2012) further describes:

> it is now possible for every citizen willing to spend a little money to respond directly and almost instantly to world emergencies simply by sitting down at a computer or picking up a cell phone. The great beneficiaries of the new superfast mass philanthropy are the larger charities and INGOs, for they have the know-how to intervene where needed. (pp. 292-293).

The professionalization of fundraising and organized philanthropy has allowed a shift towards a more systematic and strategic approach in the field, aimed at raising funds for non-profit organizations in a cost-effective way, and connecting with communities around the world (Betzler, 2014; Greenberg & Walters, 2004). The professionalization of the field is also timed with the advent of mass media, including radio and newspapers, which facilitated broader outreach and mobilization of supporters beyond a specific geographic location, requiring more strategy by organizations in a variety of fields (Russo, 2023). As this essay continues, the different roles and components of the fundraising profession will be analyzed, including the marketing, communications and community influence.

Overall, as the fundraising profession has grown, there has been an increased awareness and recognition within the non-profit sector that fundraising is a critical component of organizational operations that requires greater attention, skill, and detail (Greenberg & Walters, 2004; Skinner, 2019). Such growth and development in the field allows a greater focus on expanding and implanting fundraising strategies that are more tailored to the specific needs of an organization and customization for donors, rather than relying on a generic approach that may have been done in the past (Skinner, 2019). This strategic approach to donor relations becomes critical as potential donors and donors have many competing organizations for their time and attention, even just within the types of causes and movements that are working around the world, let alone in their own communities (Tillotson, 2009).

Second, the professionalization of the field builds-in an ethical fundraising practice, which includes transparency in financial reporting and stewardship, which increasingly have become important considerations for any donor in deciding where their fundraising dollars go (Betzler, 2014). As can be true in any industry, there have been many instances of unethical fundraising and misuse of donor funds, including examples within the American Red Cross and United Way, previously established as foundational institutions of philanthropic work (Rozario, 2003). Finally, and of important consideration moving forward in this work, the professionalization of the field of fundraising has created a space and need for decisions based on academic research, practice and data in four main disciplines: public relations, marketing, non-profit management and higher education administration (Mack, 2016).

As is true in many types of organizations, there are different roles and functions that make up the entirety of the organizational structure. Fundraising professionals may specialize in a particular area of fundraising, such as major gifts or planned giving or they may work in general development to secure funds for annual operating expenses, program costs, and other initiatives (Oliński & Szamrowski, 2018). The professionalization of the field includes the creation of certificates, degrees and diplomas from a variety of academic institutions, in areas of donor engagement, donor communications and strategic planning (Betzler, 2014). Regardless of their area of expertise, professional fundraisers are responsible for identifying potential donors, developing relationships with them, and soliciting donations in a variety of ways (Drea et al., 2021). Once these potential donors are identified there is a variety of skill sets required to build a relationship with these individuals, of which are the central focus to this work.

Trained fundraising professionals are now recognized as crucial members of any charity team, beyond the work of just volunteer roles in the community as discussed earlier in this section. Fundraising professionals have their own professional organizations, such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), as an example. The AFP was established in 1960, and now has over 30,000 members worldwide (AFP, 2016), who work in a variety of organizations and causes, with a goal for fundraising successfully and ethically. The landscape for the field of fundraising has continued to change, and the causes in search of fundraising dollars continues to become more diverse (Drea et al., 2021).

The majority of charitable dollars in the United States, as an example, go to religion (32%), education (15%), human services (12%), grants and foundations (11%) and healthcare (8%) (National Philanthropic Trust, 2016). The focus of analysis in this dissertation is the educational allotment of funds for donations, but it is important to consider the examples provided earlier where educational institutions were established by many churches, and in some cases, still have close ties to those religious causes.

20th Century, Online Fundraising and Data

Philanthropy varies in size of gift and the way in which a donation is received, including the more recent forms that rely on the Internet and online donations, like crowdsourced funding and various e-giving platforms (Lacetera, et al., 2014). In the late 20th century, technology presented a transformative shift in fundraising practices with the advent of the internet, personal cell phones and data collection systems (Goecks, et al., 2008). These technological changes at the turn of the century helped global mass philanthropy to contribute to a larger communitarian movement with a more systematic approach over time (Lacetera, et al., 2014).

Within these various gifts there are not just large-scale philanthropic donations, but there are many smaller donations and community drives that contribute to the health of the philanthropic industry source. Fundraising in online communities creates a field where “equally important as the club of billionaires is to the future of philanthropy, so too are the contributions Americans of modest means channelled through mass appeals that have so often worked in sync with large donations” (Zunz, 2012, p. 298-299).

Beyond the traditional means of fundraising, technology has allowed non-profit organizations around the World to take advantage of online platforms, social media and websites to reach a wider audience (Goecks, et al., 2008; Kim, et al., 2017; Lacetera, et al., 2014). As Karpf (2018) explains, using these digital tools and analytics in donor management allows for a new potential of “growthiness” (p. 5) as he describes, where there is a focus to expand an organizations total contact list size for potential donors. Online giving platforms, crowdfunding, and email campaigns make it easier for individuals to contribute to causes they cared about (Boeder, 2002), and as the technology advanced further, data analytics and donor management systems have enabled fundraisers to personalize their approaches and target donors more effectively (Kim, et al., 2017). These computational improvements in the field of fundraising have meant that fundraising professionals can create models for the relationships they have with stakeholders and help in communication and the cycle of giving by each donor over time (Goecks, et al., 2008).

The various online platforms and digital tools available for donor data collection and collection of funds have allowed non-profit organizations to create personalized fundraising pages, accept donations online in a variety of payment methods and to track donor information over a period of time (Castillo, et al., 2014). Online platforms can also provide real-time data for fundraisers on how successful an organization or specific fundraiser may be performing and can incorporate social media sharing to promote the campaign further within a donor’s social circle (Soleh, 2020). These online tools can increase the organization's visibility and the likelihood of potential donors, ideally leading to greater exposure and more donations (Bhati & McDonnell, 2020).

A great example of an online tool for donations in action occurred in 2014, when the “Ice Bucket Challenge” for Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, more widely known as ALS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease, was shared on social media with links to online donations for ALS (Pressgrove, et al., 2018). The campaign asked participants to donate to the organization using the link but to also asked community leaders to create their own social content dumping a bucket of water on their head while challenging their own network to do the same (Alfaro, 2015). This campaign grew to become one of the world's largest social media successes in fundraising and campaign awareness, with millions of people posting their content in support of the ALS campaign, and $115 million in donations in just one year (The ALS Association, 2017).

With over $22 billion dollars donated online in 2010, an increase from around $7 billion dollars in 2006, online giving represents a significant portion of the fundraising industry in the United States and continues to grow every year worldwide (Castillo, et al., 2014). Online donations are partly successful because of the peer-to-peer components that encourage solicitation and sharing among communities (Andreoni, et al., 2017), similar to that of the earlier fundraising initiatives presented in this work, like that of ALS.

Work by Fundly (2018), an online giving platform in 2018 estimated that friends asking other friends to donate to a charity increases the likelihood of receiving a gift by 10 times over any other method, and the average size of the gift increases by 52%. As the donations have increased, so have the number of not-for-profits available for consideration by donors, and a study by Imagine Canada found there were 170,000 charities in Canada alone (2023).

Along with online fundraising, many not-for-profits have moved to a systematic approach with the assistance of data analysis or scoring software systems, like Raiser's Edge, SalesForce, the aforementioned Fundly as well as others (Blackbaud, 2019). These tools allow not-for-profit organizations a way to collect information or data on a group of individuals or constituents over a period of time and interactions. Blackbaud's Raiser's Edge as an example, scrapes existing information from a variety of sources that are available publicly, in combination with algorithmic scoring, to group individuals by types or sets (Dencik, et al., 2018). The software system designs and algorithms - automated instructions to process data and produce outputs – allow for understanding previous occurrences in predicting future behaviour, to improve efficiency and success (Gillespie, 2014).

Specifically, with the not-for-profit sector, the scores for potential giving within these software systems are calculated based on a variety of information available both offline and online, also known as data points that help to build out donor models and pattern analysis (Birkholz, 2020). The suite of tools and techniques can analyze constituencies, build models to predict behaviours and make organizational decisions by helping to evaluate performance of campaigns and programs, and predicting future performance (Birkholz, 2020). The data points collected by these systems relate to fundraising goals for the organization, including any transactional data for any previous donations, but also more personal assessments, like an individual's estimated home value, job title, public contracts, census records, their net worth and address, but thus far, very few successfully collect any communications data or preferences as data points (McCann, et al., 2018).

An increasing amount of social activity and human behaviours are being altered into set data points within various software, to be tracked, collected and investigated by a variety of actors in both public and private sectors (Dencik, et al., 2018). As Mayer-Schönberger and Cukier (2013) suggests, this emerging capacity to calculate and review big data, has led to new opportunities for insights and creating value for what is perceived as efficiency. These data points are then used within the algorithms, which as McMann et al. (2012) explained are "increasingly used as tools to facilitate evidence-based decision making, utilizing large data sets to draw statistically significant relationships between different factors" (p.12), in this case, to apply a score for likelihood of giving.

As discussed, this type of scoring is not new and has been used in the financial industry as an example for credit scores for some time. In those instances, the history of an individual's transactions and financial activities are used to calculate a prediction of their likelihood to be financially responsible in the future (Dixon & Gellman, 2014). However, even financial companies have started to expand their collected data sets to include more information publicly available online, including an individual's friends on social media, and credit scores of their friends (Fisher, 2018; McCann et al., 2018), which as this essay will present, is something fundraising professionals should consider.

Marketing-style techniques such as collecting information and audience segmentation have been used in many sectors for some time, allowing organizations to understand the data points and segments within their audience, for many years for strategy development (Dixon & Gellman, 2014). In the last few years there has been an increased use and reliance on these software systems as more personal information is being shared digitally (Hallerstein, 2008). For the not-for-profit sector, these software system designs become attractive because the construct is goal-oriented, an important factor in the survival of any not-for-profit (Liu, 2012).

The scores collected within these software systems are critical to the function of any not-for-profit because all strategic decisions are made based on the individuals within these segments (Mann, 2007; Hallerstein, 2008; Birkholz, 2020). However, as this technology generates more value in the field, more not-for-profits are implementing, working with, and trying to improve these types of systems, creating the possibility that the data may be reduced to subjective factors, impacting the effectiveness of the system (Mayer-Schönberger & Cukier, 2013). There is little accountability and transparency on the algorithms of these systems, as they are seen as trade secrets and rarely shared or discussed for public review (Zuboff, 2015).

One example of a fundraising system in practice, and one that is most widely used by North American not-for-profits is Blackbaud. Blackbaud is headquartered in South Carolina, and has business in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom (Blackbaud, 2019a). Within the not-for-profit sector, Blackbaud has over 9,000 clients in North America, representing nearly $32 billion dollars in total fundraising in 2018 (The Blackbaud Institute, 2019).

Within the list of products Blackbaud offers are Raiser’s Edge, their donor management database system and Target Analytics, their proprietary scoring system. These systems work in complement to each other, tracking a variety of transactional and personal information (Blackbaud, 2019b). Both are designed for the not-for-profit sector, allowing for an in-depth donor management system that tracks a variety of transactional and personal information, as well as scoring individuals based on the data collected (Blackbaud, 2019a). This type of tool is particularly useful for a larger scale not-for-profit like a postsecondary institution, where they are managing thousands and thousands of donors and potential donors, with a variety of alumni data.

Target Analytics of the Blackbaud system specifically looks at using analytics and big data to calculate scores for any person within their database (Blackbaud, 2019b). They use their software technology to scrape data from over 100 different publicly available data sources, including government surveys, home and tax value information, as well as estimated income based on job title and industry (Blackbaud, 2019b). In the United States this is particularly useful, where there is a variety of information available publicly that may not be available elsewhere, including property records (for instance property tax details), any public contract, employment details at various levels, and even census records. This means that in the United States they have insights collected on over 200 million consumers with over 1,000 attributes available to them for individuals and households (Blackbaud, 2019b).

They indicate that these pieces of information collected place the highest values on:

Annual income: High earners using data that predicts income at the household level.

Net worth: Identifying those with high net worth by combining home value, liquid investment, and other proprietary data.

Investments: Using the largest survey of financial assets available to predict current investments.

Discretionary spending: Based on known buying patterns, accurately predict discretionary spending/household income. (Blackbaud, 2019b)

Individuals are then assigned a rating by running the information collected through their proprietary algorithm. The higher the score the algorithm calculates for the individual, the more likely they are to donate to the organization.

These values are then calculated using their proprietary algorithm to create four key audience segments for fundraising (Blackbaud, n.d.) described as:

Acquaintance: Low likelihood, Low capacity

These constituents have the lowest capacity to give and are also the least likely to give to your organization. It is recommended that you minimize work with this group.

Long Shot: Low likelihood, High capacity

This group includes constituents with a high capacity to give, but they may not have any ties to your organization.

Fan: High likelihood, Low capacity

This group includes the most loyal supporters, who are more likely to give based on affinity for the organization but are not currently able to give larger gifts given their financial position.

VIP: High likelihood, High capacity.

This group has the highest likelihood and most to give. This includes loyal donors and based on their financial status are more likely to give larger gifts.

It is clear then, looking at this list, that these types of systems don’t account for the communications and digital community that occur within these organizations.

Additionally, strategic use of data can help any part of the organization and for many charities younger donors are an important segment to consider for growth. However, within this software design, these segments were accidentally excluded, or consistently rated in the bottom two categories listed earlier. When the most significant values in design are placed on home value, home ownership, net worth and investments, this segment is systematically overlooked.

Younger generations are statistically less likely to update their home address, as many do not establish a permanent home for a more extended period of time, compared to older generations (Achieve, 2017). This segment of the population is also more likely to rent, according to the Urban Institute (2017). Those under 36 years of age are, on average, receiving a lower score in Blackbaud's software, meaning they are statistically more likely to be excluded.

Although it is important to note that not-for-profits are most interested in those with high scores related to those categories, as their potential for a larger donation is higher, it excludes building a relationship with those in younger demographics, which could have a long-term impact on the growth of the organization. Younger generations do in fact donate, with the most recent statistics indicating that almost 50% of those 36 years old and younger are giving already to a monthly giving program (Nonprofits Source, 2018).

Philanthropy and Canada

Philanthropy and funds collected from donors represents just a small percentage overall for funds with public charities (13%), compared with assistance from government funds with grants, contracts and fees for any service (32.5%), and market revenue if there is any sale of goods or services (47.5%) (Urban Inst, 2015). Philanthropy extends past the community-based organizations mentioned earlier, to government organizations including hospitals, schools, and higher education institutions, as well as others, where the funding provided by the government may not cover the entire costs for the organization's or institution's work (Phillips and Jung, 2016).

Within all of these not-for-profit organizations, individuals provide the majority of all charitable gifts over corporations, constituting approximately 70% of all philanthropy (Giv. USA Found, 2016). As a group of donors, individuals become valuable to an organization because they can give many times throughout their lifetime, or even leave a gift as a bequest after they die and are often referred to as mass donors (Ostrower,1995). For this research, individual donors and their relationship with an institution will be the focus, although it is acknowledged that there are many other types of donors including foundations. In Canada, there are almost 5 million individual donors that gave in 2021, contributing to a variety of organizations (Government of Canada, 2023).

Canadians have been rated the 8th in the World in the 2023 World Giving Index, which suggests overall a strong sector, however it has declined from the 2nd place in 2013 (Canada Helps, 2023). Canada has one of the largest and most vibrant not-for-profit sectors relative to GDP and diversity of charities, including charities supporting the arts, environmental protection, professional associations, health and education (Hall, et al., 2005). According to Statistics Canada, there were over 86,000 registered charities in the country in 2020, collecting donations that equal 17% of Canada's entire GDP (Government of Canada, 2022). This does, however, mean that there is no shortage of options of donations and fundraising initiatives across the country, and this does not include the number of charities that are available worldwide for donations by Canadians.

Imagine Canada, a national charitable organization that supports and researches Canadian charities and not-for-profits, describes fundraising as a crucial part of sustaining the work of these vital organizations across the country (Barr, et al 2005). To support these diverse services and campaigns, Canadians donated approximately $10.6 billion in 2020 to charitable organizations across the country, but this number is decreasing every year (Government of Canada, 2022). This however does not consider many crowdsource funding campaigns that do not always provide receipts, and the smaller donations that tend to go unclaimed overall (Canada Helps, 2023). The potential then exists for a more systematic approach in profiling donors and potential donors, as it is critical to any not-for-profits because it allows for a more targeted approach to individuals for increased fundraising success and measurement overtime, while an overall group of potential donors decreases (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

For some organizations, informing and cultivating relationships with these individual donors is more vital to success than others, in particular for those who are experiencing declining government funding and support and are looking for ways to change their revenue models to include more private donations. It is acknowledged that making a donation could be giving in money, time, but also other resources like in-kind donations and securities (Havens et al., 2007, Musick & Wilson, 2008, Phillips & Jung, 2016), but for purpose of this research I will focus primarily on the donation of money.

A review from Imagine Canada (Barr, et al, 2005) noted as the first imperical study of fundraising in Canada noted that, “Canadian non-profit and voluntary organizations receive more revenue from the government than do those in other countries. This pattern is primarily attributable to the influence of hospitals, universities, and colleges" (p. 4). However, while the federal and provincial governments scale back their funding, donors in Canada have continued to scale back their donations as well since this initial study in 2005, and according to Statistics Canada, while the total number of donations increased in 2020 to $10.6 billion (up 2.7%), the total number of donors overall decreased by 0.6%, continuing a decline that started in 2011 (Government of Canada, 2022).

Certainly, having fewer donors and smaller donations overall continues to be a challenge in a changing environment, where there is no shortage of causes and organizations looking for funding in not just Canada, but around the world. This decrease in donor support and the total number of donors is further supported by the research by Environics Research and Canada Helps as summarized in their 2022 Giving Report. Environics presented the idea of “the giving gap”, a distance between charity needs and donors giving, and that this gap continued to grow in Canada over the last few years (Canada Helps, 2022).

Within this research it was noted that the percentage of Canadians that donate to charities declined year over year, and this has caused an increased reliance on smaller groups of aging donors to hopefully assist in shortfalls for charities across the country (Canada Helps, 2022). Ultimately, when this group of aging donors of a shrinking generation no longer are able to support these organizations, the shortfalls that exist will continue to grow and as a result the services and success of many not-for-profits will be impacted.

This is not just a challenge limited to the demographics of donors, but additionally the percentage overall that Canadians are giving is declining. Through an analysis of tax filer data, Environics concluded that the percentage of income that Canadians were giving was in steady decline, and that only 18% of tax filers in 2020 claimed a donation, versus 25% in 2006 (Canada Helps, 2023). The most significant drops were noted among Generation X (40-54 years old) and families in higher income brackets, although donations declined across all age groups, including a concerning trend where households with an income over $100,000 have participated less in giving dropping from 36% to 28% overall in 2020 (Canada Helps, 2023). This indicates that those within the higher income brackets in Canada are still not giving to fundraising causes, which can be caused both by a lack of desire to donate, but also the financial changes of the economy within the last decade.

The research and findings shown within this essay provide a solution for the continuing decrease in government funding for social programs, charities and non-profit organizations. As Miller (1998) shares, with organizations increasingly relying on donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations, the relationships and strategy for donors becomes more important. This increasing reliance is equally true for colleges and universities, which are seeing a decrease in the number of dollars they receive from governments for programs, services and domestic students, pressuring them to look for more private donations in an effective way.

According to Miller (1998) the:

> Federal budget marked a turning point for Canadian non-profit organizations as the federal transfer payments to the provinces were simultaneously restructured and reduced. This, in turn, meant that provincial funds flowing to non-profit organizations would also be cut, or terminated, and restructured as service contracts continued to replace grants. (p. 401).

This is further supported by more recent work by Lang (2022), who noted that the funding for not-for-profits, including universities and colleges, has been severe and has forced organizations to diversify their funding models. As Lang (2022) indicates, the reductions have been severe since the 1998 study by Miller, and the real dollar value of public funding in just higher education has dropped by approximately twenty percent, with the declines in Ontario and Quebec being even greater.

The number of donations and the group of potential donors continues to change for all not-for-profits, and younger donors become increasingly important for strategy and long-term growth for not-for-profits. In 2020, Statistics Canada indicated that the number of donations from those aged under 24 increased by 19.1% over the year, representing 4% of all donors in Canada, however their median donation was $50, the lowest of any age group (Government of Canada, 2022). The challenge then is clear for many not-for-profits, as the younger donors may be willing to give, however the amount of their donations is significantly smaller on average than those of the older generations, and so building those relationships for a potential larger gift overtime is the focus for many not-for-profits.

Not only does the number of younger donors and their smaller donations impact the strategy of an organization, the way in which this demographic wants to donate becomes critical for success. This younger group of donors are more likely to be involved in charitable giving as technologies continue to improve, and research by Choi, et al (2019) found that the proliferation of digital technologies made young people more aware of causes and the needs in their communities. Additionally, online platforms often provide transparency on the impact of any donations, which helps a younger demographic people feel more connected to the causes they support (Choi, et al. 2019). It is critical then that every not-for-profit work to improve the way in which they operate digitally so that they are able to find success with this more knowledgeable and demanding demographic.

Younger donors have more unique preferences and ways that they want to be communicated with, so it becomes increasingly important that charities understand their desire for greater digital engagement, communication and more modern ways to give. In fact, a survey by Canada Helps in 2022 found that 60 percent of Canadians are doing homework on the charities that they give to, and that 70 percent of donors change their giving after reading a charity report from a not-for-profit.

This can include cryptocurrency, more cost-effective ways to give like donations of securities, or, as noted in the Canada Helps study, younger Canadians may look for other ways to contribute when they don't have the financial means, including volunteering, fundraising on behalf of the organization, attending events or sharing information about the charity or the cause (Canada Helps, 2022). By working to improve the communication and engagement with donors and potential donors in a variety of ways, organizations can potentially increase their donations in the long term, helping to overcome this significant challenge for fundraising success.

Conclusion

Fundraising in North America has come a long way from its humble beginnings rooted in religious philanthropy, and certainly must continue to evolve in order to find success with changing donor demographics. The history of fundraising efforts is still relevant however, as ways to reach out and connect with potential donors continues to evolve with both the technology and data available, as well as with the ways in which potential donors connect with each other and the organizations in their communities. Fundamentally, the key components of donations and philanthropy remain the same as they were at the start of fundraising, as people try to make a difference in their communities for causes and organizations that are important to them.

The gifts of the wealthy, and of those that are leading their communities were once the central focus of work for fundraisers, but this new era of donors is similarly trying to fill the needs of their communities. Earlier in the 18th century, wealthy families like the Carnegies and the Rockefellers led philanthropy efforts throughout the United States and what was then referred to as the Dominion of Canada (Lang, 2022), with leaders like Andrew Carnegie sharing his belief in philanthropy in famous 1889 essay, *Gospel of Wealth* (Barman, 2017). In that essay, he shared that he believed that very wealthy Americans like himself had a responsibility and a moral duty to share their fortune beyond anything they needed to live, to improve their community, and to close the gap between the very wealthy and the very poor (Carnegie, 1889). As Zunz (2012) describes this time during the 18th century meant that:

> Philanthropic projects were acts of generosity and hubris on a scale never before entertained. The new rich felt free to both envision and fashion the common good, and they did so. Until then, it has been unimaginable that some Americans could be wealthy enough to build, almost entirely by themselves, a complete university and have it compete effectively with older schools that had acquired size and strength over generations. (pp. 8-9).

This became the point in time in the United States, where philanthropists like John Hopkins, Ezra Cornell, and Leland Stanford started universities that are still major institutions today. In Canada however, the greater challenge is that the university system is largely controlled and funded by the government, where, right until the 1990s, institutions receive over 90 percent of their funding through public funding. Historically, in 1827, Upper Canada, which is now Ontario, established what is now called the University of Toronto on crown land, marking the start of a provincial university that was later followed by other Canadian colonies (Lang, 2022). Similar to the United States during this time, there were a small group of secular universities started with private funds, but by the 19th century they become eligible for public funding. This meant that over time, both the structural system of the government (taxes, benefits, etc) and universities in Canada overall, did not support the growth of private funding for education, but also the reliance on government funds shifted the organizational structure and focus.

The relationship between personal wealth and education in North America is well established and has played a critical factor in the health and well-being of the United States and Canada for a long while. However, since the 19^{th} century, fundraising has had to expand beyond a small number of relationships with the wealthiest families, to one that relies on a variety of relationships with stakeholders of all different backgrounds for the potential benefit of raising money.

Fundraising has since grown to become a complex and multifaceted discipline in North America, with a diverse range of strategies and channels for any organization and their donors and potential donors. As not-for-profits, and specifically educational institutions in North America continue to face new challenges, fundraising will remain a vital force driving positive change. The ability to support these organizations and causes will shape our communities and countries, making the importance of communications strategy and works like this, more important and critical for the success of the fundraising field moving forward.

In Canada, it is clear that the focus on strategy within the changing donor landscape will be a key to any level of success for every not- for-profit. And as governments change the focus of their budgets, institutions like universities can no longer rely on their traditional funding models to sustain and thrive. The communications strategy then, for any of these organizations will become critical for success in this challenging landscape, and maintaining an active donor base, with those who are connected to the institution should be a central focus. Additionally, as discussed, the individual and concentrated wealth that once dictated the key to fundraising success is not as prevalent for the average Canadian, so the impact that smaller donors over a longer time period will have, becomes a key factor in any not-for-profits financial stability and success.

As the competition for donor dollars increases and public scrutiny of charities grows more intense with less donors and more charities, simply having a good cause to promote is often no longer enough. Therefore, in considering this changing landscape, and need for new sources of revenue, many not-for-profit organizations are reviewing their practices and communications methods to ensure that donor relations and donor retention are well managed (Liu, 2012). A potential change for many organizations could mean focusing on the improvement or development of strategic public relations management, improved digital engagement, including social media, and improved donor profiling, which may not have previously been a focus or requirement for fundraising success (Sargeant, 2001).

For example, in my personal experience, the databases and systems mentioned earlier become good sources of data fundraising strategy, but they fail to provide a more holistic picture of the relationship between any institution and their alumni and donors. Survey data and scraping of publicly available information can allow analysis of relative weights for different socio demographic traits, like gender, socioeconomic status, education etc., as ways to predict who is likely to give money (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011, Havens et al., 2007, Jencks, 1987, Wiepking & Bekkers, 2012). Data, and the traditional weight attributed to the more demographic traits in fundraising strategy need to be reassigned to include factors that consider relationships with an organization, and in particular, the digital relationship with an organization for younger donors and potential donors.

There are a variety of tactics that are traditionally associated with fundraising initiatives, similar to those that were used in the community chest initiatives discussed earlier. Fundraising tactics like donor event locations are selected based on the most popular locations within the data available and mailings are done to households with higher net income, but neither really work to understand the connection to the institution or community as motivational factors. In fact, motivations for giving to an institution often become factors that are not considered on a larger aggregate by fundraising and communications professionals, and as such, the appeal and strategy to build relationships with stakeholder groups are often based on assumptions or driven by topics important to the institution.

To use the earlier example, not-for-profits start to work on their event strategy, based on where individuals reside, and cities that appeared the most frequently within the database were those who benefitted from focused and strategic relationship building activities. In other instances, all communications and public relations tactics are directed to those with the higher scores in the software system, even though their scoring is based on more superficial factors as shown in the data. These markers become very traditional ways to consider their potential donors, and certainly limits the potentials to understanding their community to those that have homes of a certain value, or jobs with a traditional title, or even assumed relationship markers based on more traditional factors.

This limits the opportunity to understand those outside of the traditional elements considered for fundraising success.

This type of work means that a great deal of strategy and effort focuses on those with the higher scores, which in the short term may provide success, it limits the fundraising potential and relationship building for those outside of higher scores. Those with lower scores did not receive communication or updates from the organization, outside of more generic emails or social media posts. For years marketing companies have started to expand their collected data sets to include more publicly available online data, including an individual's friends on social media, interactions online with the organization and other more detailed factors, something that would be of more value in a not-for-profit environment (Fisher, 2018; McCann et al, 2018). This diverse data collected by marketing companies should be an important consideration for the changing strategy that not-for-profits use, and one that forms the basis of the work within this research.

If, as other researchers have found, those donors with higher education have a significant and positive relationship with a likelihood to give and provide more significant amounts on average for charities (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Havensetal, 2007), then it is likely that post-secondary institutions have a unique opportunity to fundraise successfully in the years ahead with a clear and concise relationship and communications strategy in place. This becomes a more meso-level approach as discussed by Barman (2017), where philanthropic behaviour is more contingent on the embedded dynamic donors have with social relationships and an organization (Emirbayer, 1997). Post-secondary institutions therefore need to adjust their fundraising strategy to elevate from the history of fundraising as covered in this chapter, to one that includes more modern elements of communications, brand and digital strategy for relationships with potential donors and graduates in the years to come.

CHAPTER 2: FUNDRAISING AS A FIELD AND PRACTICE

"Organizations must communicate symmetrically with the different kinds of publics found within these stakeholder categories to develop high-quality, long-term relationships with them" (Grunig, 2006, p. 159)

Organizational Identification

The way that people connect with an organization and see themselves within the work that the organization is doing is critical to the work that any not-for-profit does. Organizational identification, or identification with a psychological group is defined by Mael and Tetrick (1992) "as the perception of sharing experiences of a focal group and sharing characteristics of the group's members" (p. 815). This allows people to identify themselves based on social identity and various group classifications to create order in their social environments and position themselves in it (Tajfel & Turner, 1985).

Organizational identification, as concluded by Mael and Ashforth (1992) means individuals "who identify with the organization are apt to support the organization in various ways, and that identification can be encouraged through various means" (p. 117). This type of identification is clearly a cornerstone to the work of fundraising, as those who identify with the cause or the work of a not-for-profit would be most likely to support the organization in a variety of ways.

It is more important than, for the purpose of this research, to focus on organizational and relationship marketing. Specifically, the area of student and alumni relationships for higher education is studied, under the lens of fundraising as a communications and marketing initiative, as examined by many researchers (Nyman, et al., 2018; Pérez-Esparrells & Torre, 2012). This study area is well researched within the United States, particularly in universities and colleges, where the institutional funding models have created a necessity to better understand the role that student experience and student and alumni communities play in an organization's success, as government contributes a less critical component to the financial stable (Frey, 1981). In Canada, however, although there are some studies on relationships as a whole, there are fewer studies that are specific to the work of post-secondary institutions and the organizational identification within them and their audiences. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the educational system in Canada is in need of a greater focus on fundraising and private donors, and as presented earlier, the United States model offers many considerations for best practice and success in fundraising for education.

Assuming that donations become a commitment in the relationship with an organization, their identification with that organization becomes based on a belief and acceptance of the organization's values and goals. This becomes then a willingness to put in an effort for the organization, sometimes through financial donations or donations of time, and a desire to maintain the relationship over time (Mowday et al, 1979). Such organizational identification and commitment mean that individuals who have identification with a particular organization have a "perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103).

Alumni and student relationships within organizational identification and their postsecondary institution is well studied, and has been covered by a variety of researchers, but mainly within the United States (Frisby, et al., 2019). That is why this work, surrounding the specifics of postsecondary in Canada is so important, as the nuances of Canadian postsecondary and Canadian audiences vary slightly from those researched in the United States.

Organizational identification in higher education is important in relation to fundraising and philanthropy because donors often use their own understanding of the organization and their relationship with it when deciding to give (Bullock, 1952). The consideration of organizational identity is distinct from giving as an act of loyalty or satisfaction with an organization (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). As Bullock (1952) outlines, it is possible for an alumnus or an alumna to be satisfied with the education they received, but they may not perceive themselves as being one with the institution. Therefore, looking at the relationship alumni have with an institution, not just that they are alumni generally, and understanding the specific dynamics to the markers for relationship success is important to targeting an audience.

Using the research done with American institutions does however allow an understanding for identification and the effects for alumni. Those who do experience true organization identification see the perceived distinctiveness of the institution's values and practices, the prestige of the institution, and the competition between the school and others, as something that positively affects their identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This can mean that an alumnus has a relationship with their alma mater that goes beyond just satisfaction and loyalty, and ultimately increases their likelihood of giving (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Other literature indicates that financial support for an institution is increased or renewed over time when there is an improvement in the perceived prestige or excellence of an institution (Cameron & Ulrich, 1986). This research becomes crucial, as despite offering a critical review of the communications by institutions to improve relationship, the secondary goal is to improve financial support by alumni.

With many institutions being around for many decades, the prestige and reputation of many postsecondary institutions has been one of the most important measurements of success for alumni. The prestige or perceived reputation of an institution, as a reflection of organizational identification, was studied by Sung and Yang (2008), who assessed the impact that image and related constructs had on student supportive attitudes and identification with their school. To help in their assessment they looked at how students and alumni support the institution, based on image, reputation, and external prestige. Sung and Yang (2008) concluded that perceived external prestige is the strongest influencer on how a student reflects on the relationship with the institution, and that “by investing in the visibility and reputation of a corporate brand through external communication” (p. 371), an institution could improve their external prestige and identity for alumni. The same is true in any instance, the better people feel about the cause, and the work being done, the more likely they are to donate, so it makes sense that the prestige of an institution becomes so critical.

To use the example of Concordia University presented earlier, Concordia is consistently ranked very highly in Maclean's magazine's ranking of Canadian post-secondary institutions for reputation over the last 20 years. The external prestige, image, and reputation for post-secondary institutions like the example of Concordia University, comes from schools that are more highly regarded, and often with deep traditions that exemplify their excellence, as supported by the work of Clark (1962), in a study looking educational institutions. This external prestige allows for a distinct organizational identification that generally shows competitive excellence in a variety of areas.

This opportunity to promote excellence and therefore great more prestige can include promoting prominent faculty, such as community or industry leaders in particular areas of study or research, Nobel laureates or other identified successes and awards in various fields, publicizing the accomplishments of alumni and faculty (for example, within top alumni lists produced by each institution), and rituals and events (e.g., homecoming, pep rallies, graduations as examples) (Steeples, 1986). These types of factors also become critical in the scoring process for *Maclean's* magazine's ranking, meaning additionally the school would rank higher adding even more to the external prestige for the institution.

There can be two types of membership that create an organizational identification for an individual with an organization. This first type of membership can be done in a more official way with a membership strategy through which individuals are asked to pay or join a membership or club (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995). This type of membership is based on a certain fee or level of donation to achieve a certain role within the organization. Alternatively, the second type of membership is more implied, for example when one graduates from a university, one is automatically a member of an alumni association, with no fees or consent to join anything official. In either format, when an individual sees themselves as a member the organization will more likely see an increase in positive behaviours (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). This is supported by groups and clubs that work within institutions like official alumni associations and local alumni groups.

If an individual sees themselves as a symbolic or actual member of a university-affiliated group (e.g., a sports team or alumni group), then they will more likely perceive themselves to be intertwined with the success and failures of that group. This will mean that an individual will then likely want to be active and public supporters of the institution (Linville, et al., 1989; Tolman, 1943). Organizational identification allows one to define oneself by one's membership in a group or organization. Indeed, organizational identification ultimately becomes a key consideration for post-secondary institutions and their sports teams (Foote, 1951). Post-secondary institutions form a variety of formal and informal alumni organizations and communities, both in the larger organizational context but also in smaller subsections of the school (Brubacher & Rudy, 1976), allowing affiliation with an alma mater for prestige, identity and can be a means to donations (Pickett, 1986).

Teams, clubs, and varsity sports present a natural opportunity to review the relationship with reputation, success, and organizational identification for alumni. One of the central texts to alumni organizational identification research was done by Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman, and Sloan, in a study called "Basking in Reflected Glory; Three (Football) Field Studies" (1976). Their research demonstrated that students and alumni chose to wear more apparel identifying their institution in direct connection with how well their sports teams, (in this case, football team specifically) was playing, as an example of organizational identification.

This correlation of winning teams to student pride and loyalty also changed the way that alumni saw their alma mater after a win of important games or championships. Perceived success within the organization changed the way that those in a relationship with the institution saw their alma mater, and as a result, changed the way that they supported and spoke about the institution (Cialdini et al., 1976). For example, at McMaster University, alumni may have identities connected with the institution that are highly committed to the institution, making them dedicated "Mauraders" the mascot for the school's sports teams, implying that they will remain dedicated to McMaster and McMaster teams and follow the university's successes and failures closely over a longer period of time.

Pride and prestige, bringing about strong organizational identification continues to be an important context to consider when specifically using the Cialdini et al. (1976) work because sports and athletics success continues to be a key communication platform for many organizations and institutions specifically. As discussed by Gordon Gray and Stacia Wert-Gray (2012), and Bob Stewart (2006), sports teams that can successfully implement a strong relationship marketing program, including performance outcomes, are able to develop longer-term relationships with their audience. Their work indicates that this will increase the likelihood of creating a long-term fan and customer over time (Gray & Wert-Gray, 2012, Stewart, 2006). This means for postsecondary institutions that have successful sports teams, they would be best served by creating a program that can increase student and alumni pride in any athletic achievement, to increase their organizational identification and therefore alumni pride over time.

In the digital age, sports media has transformed from a one-way communication platform into an interactive and dynamic space that fosters community engagement. The sports media model and community building now go hand in hand, creating a unique ecosystem that brings sports enthusiasts, athletes, and brands together (Jhally, 1989). This means that sports teams, and in this instance, the institutions that they represent, have become the content distributor and creator (Dottori, Sévigny, O'Reilly, 2022). The opportunity to connect with an audience using digital communications, expands reach and creates a channel for relationship building and, ultimately, organizational identification. In this work, by looking at each post-secondary institution, it is also important to consider the context of organizational identification and the sports and winning team element to each university, as the literature makes it clear that it is an opportunity for success.

Relationship Marketing

On a broader discussion, marketing theory "always has advocated in favor of a continuous orientation to the needs of the customer" (Carbonell-Foulquié, et al., 2004, p. 309)). To then look at the work of organizational identification specifically, and building relationships through identification, allows this dissertation to focus on the continuous orientation of the relationship with a customer, or in this case, a student. In post-secondary institutions, there is a unique opportunity where organizations have the opportunity to build connections with students over a period of years, before they become alumni.

Therefore, the second area of review for this chapter, and the area with the most significant amount of research, is the relationship and the importance of the student and alumni experience, which has been studied in detail in correlation to the field of relationship marketing. Morgan and Hunt (1994) define relationship marketing as a practice that focuses on the benefits of relationship exchanges rather than strict transaction exchanges.

There are many differing perspectives on relationship exchange overall, but “all view relationship marketing as implying that, increasingly, firms are competing through developing relatively long-term relationships with such stakeholders as customers, suppliers, employees, and competitors" (Hunt 1996, p.1). Using this same principle for developing long-term relationships, this chapter will approach the work that postsecondary institutions do to strategize relationship marketing in their work.

When a student has attended an institution for a few years (for most undergraduate degrees four years), there is naturally a long-term exposure to the institution as a brand and a strong foundation to building long term relationships, as they become very familiar with the organization. Keller (1993) demonstrates that brand equity and relationship “occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong, and unique brand associations in memory” (p. 2). Keller (1993) discusses the favourability of brand associations that can change based on how the relationships with brands are evaluated and communicated. This means that the true success of any marketing program is in the favourability that a consumer, or in this case an alumnus or alumna or donor, feels. They must believe that the components that make up the brand satisfy their needs and wants, to continue and potentially deepen that relationship (Keller, 1993).

Postsecondary institutions also exist in a space where there are many other schools, and some students may attend more than one when accounting for undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate studies. Within relationship marketing, it becomes important for competitors to create a trusted relationship with their stakeholders in order to be successful (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Universities exist in a similar market, where they must compete for donations and support from an audience that may have an affinity to more than one institution and may also have other unrelated charities to consider. Institutions then, need to work on their relationship marketing approach with students, before they become alumni, in order to foster a positive relationship before they are competing for support.

Because of this, many not-for-profits and institutions have adopted a business management approach that is similar to what is found in a for profit business (Bendapudi, Singh and Bendapudi, 1996). In this context, the donation that one may make for an organization becomes a part of a relational exchange, a demonstration of a relationship between the donor and the organization (German, 1997). Alumni then, who donate to their alma mater, even once, are indicating a closeness and relationship that they value with their institution and should therefore be considered to have a closer relationship than the average alumnus or alumna. In contrast, should a student not have a valued experience, or leave with a feeling of closeness as suggested, they will be less likely to donate.

Literature in the not-for-profit field has continued to demonstrate that a relationship marketing approach in the field of not-for-profits and fundraising become imperative for success, as it presents a way to manage relationships with donors and potential donors alike to build long-term value for the organization (e.g., Harvey 1990; Keegan, Moriarity and Duncan 1995; Kotler 1994). The work in the area of relationship marketing and not-for-profits become helpful in fundraising because marketing strategies involve targeting and segmentation to connect with stakeholders, and as not-for-profits compete in a changing landscape for support, adopting a marketing strategy can create a space to influence a relational exchange, while providing a strategic approach to a diverse group of donors and potential donors (Kotler & Andreasen, 1991).

The relationship marketing approach in not-for-profits becomes important for this thesis, because it elevates fundraising and donations from simply transactional operations to relational operations over an extended period of time, creating a life cycle from the student to alumni to donor. This relational approach is similar to the work of Kotler (1972) who expanded the definition of transaction in marketing to an exchange of values between two groups. A value exchange allows organizations to create a longer-term relationship with a select group, compared to a traditional approach of just looking for a single transaction from a broader group (Kalwani & Narayandas, 1995). Value exchanges are based on trust and commitment and encourage a long-term relationship for a relationship exchange, a beneficial asset for any organization, including not-for-profits (Gundlach, et al., 1995).

There are a variety of factors that impact relationships and as a result, the supporting behaviour of donating. The influencing factors as presented in the image below, demonstrate a model of the meditating influence of identification on supportive behaviours (German, 1997). Within this model it is clear that a postsecondary institution has many of the individual variables (achievement level, time with the organization, involvement in activities, and other family members affiliated with the organization). The institutional variables as presented below also become key considerations, and important for this research, using the *Maclean's* rankings as a base for understanding the scores of prestige, respect for organizational leaders, perceived reciprocity, and satisfaction with the organization.

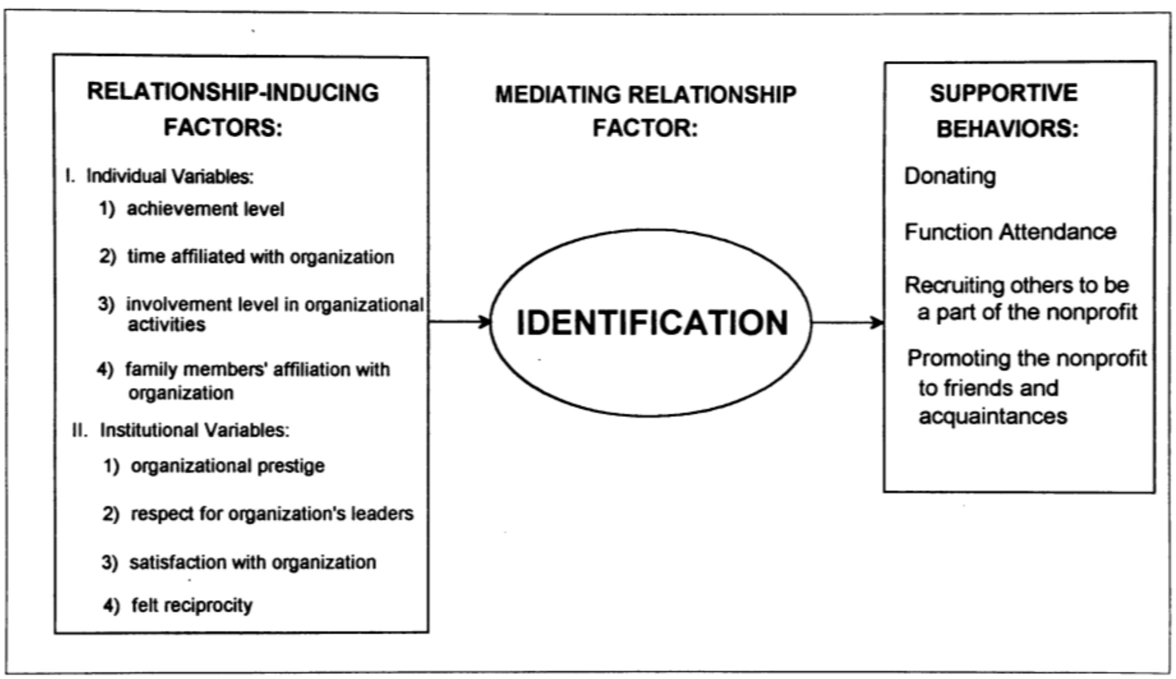

Figure 2: Model of identification and behaviours as presented by Mael and Ashforth (1992)

Mael and Ashforth (1992) position the concept of identity as an assumption that a person has various roles and identities, and depending on the situation, the importance of that identity may fluctuate. In this instance, an alumnus/alumna or student can be influenced by other individuals around them, the institution or organization and other situational factors. Mirroring the work of Mael and Ashforth (1992), where the identity that one feels with an organization, depending on its importance to the individual, influences behaviours supportive of the nonprofit organization.

From the nonprofit perspective, supportive behaviours are "behavior[s] that enhance the welfare of a needy other, by providing aid or benefit, usually with little or no commensurate reward in return" (Bendapudi, et al., 1996, p. 34). By recognizing supportive behaviours toward nonprofit organizations as relational exchange, knowledge of relationship marketing in the context of for-profit business may be applied to nonprofit organizations.

When we apply the idea of exchange and relationship marketing to the student/alumni relationship models, using the definition of identification as “the perception of belonging to a group with the result that a person identifies with that group (i.e., I am a member)" (Bhattacharya, et al., 1995, p. 47), we see that the relationships are clear examples of exchange and relationship marketing in a not-for-profit space. The time that a student has at an institution and the macro group that they then belong to as alumni create a sense of belonging and identity. At a micro level this can include the clubs, teams, groups and organizations that they may have been important during their time on campus. These identities are also considered stable and have been found to be similar to what they were when they left the university or college, even several years later (Greenwood, 1994).

Alumni have become financially important for many educational institutions (Bakal, 1979), and although the central component to the business would seem to be students, it is alumni who are considered the most important (Ransdell, 1986). In fact, donors for universities and college are more often the graduates of the institution. Indeed, there has been a positive relationship found with those who have been at the institution for a longer time period, greater than students who attended the university or college, but did not graduate, or those who did not attend at all (Keller, 1982; Morris, 1970). In addition to time on campus and attending the institution, the third most important consideration for a strong relationship with an institution is how involved students were while on campus, i.e. those who played sports or participated in clubs on campus (McNulty, 1977).

These three factors that influence a positive relationship with an institution presents an interesting cross-section within the field of fundraising in post-secondary. If the time on campus and the student and alumni relationship is so critical as shared by Keller, 1982; Morris, 1970; McNulty, 1977, then as prior work by Palmer, Koenig-Lewis, Asaad (2016) indicated that, “universities which focus on offering great academic experiences to their students will be more effective in developing strong brand identification over time which in turn leads to greater brand loyalty and brand support” (p. 3034).

This foundation for a positive relationship with time on campus, also suggests an opportunity to create community. Although there is no universal definition for a sense of community, there is a variety of literature that helps to provide a framework, including McMillan and Chavis (1986), who describe a sense of community as ‘‘a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (p. 9). This type of community and belonging to a broader group is a natural correlation for students, and in turn alumni, as they have a sense of belonging to the greater school community, a faculty, school, club, or even a sports team as reviewed earlier.

The different types of communities, the ways that students and alumni feel a part of community, and the relationships that they have within them, are not just limited to one type of group or connection. For this chapter and the understanding of public relations, I will be using the definition of community defined by Grunig and Hunt (1984), as they provide a foundational context of public relations and theory and practice with communities. Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe two distinct types of communities; they outline a community of locality, and non-geographic community of interest, this could be noted as being the broader community for those on campus together, with a tighter connection for those that live and commute to school within that small geographic space. They suggest that this type of community is the basis of almost all community relations programs, and for the purpose of this essay, are the bases of the broader central communications accounts for each educational institution (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The second definition of community described by Grunig and Hunt (1984) is “a group with a common problem or interest, regardless of geographic location" (p. 286), which is more in line with the relationships formed with the smaller clubs, groups, faculties, and teams for each institution. Within this essay, although the first definition is important for the broad central communications channels analyzed, the second type of community as described by Grunig and Hunt, as those within a campus community may or may not live geographically close to one another, but they are joined in a community of interest, becomes the most important, and aligns with the definitions of community discussed in later chapters in a digital space.

A foundational piece to understanding any relationship is consideration for the reasons for forming the relationship all together, and for this research, why someone may be willing to donate or engage with a not-for-profit organization. These reasons have been studied by many researchers, and are varied in their focus, but fundamentally can be categorized by:

(1) Demographic considerations. For example, age, gender, income, size of family, job title, and some variables around their history with the organization (i.e. Blumenfeld & Sartain, 1974; Caruthers, 1973; Haddad, 1996; Morris, 1970).

(2) Individual perceptions of the organization. Those that are being asked to give of their time or money are influenced by the prestige or perception of prestige, the organizational leaders, satisfaction with the organization and reciprocity (i.e., Gibbons, 1992; Grunig, 1993; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

(3) The variables specific to an organization. This can include the interest in a specific program, any tax benefit, a particular need requested by the organization, or personal motivation (House, 1987; Gibbons, 1992).

Within research on alumni giving, the reasons are studied in more detail by Mann (2007), who summarized them as:

(1) Charitable giving - those who are motivated by altruism, reciprocity, and direct benefits.

(2) Organizational identification - people who define themselves by association with an organization and in turn feel a strong connection to it and celebrate its successes (for example, through athletic wins or academic advancements and achievements by faculty and other alumni).

(3) Social identification - their identity is influenced by how they group themselves into social categories, and the deep connections they share with that sub-group influence them (presenting a potential opportunity to connect with smaller faculties, connected student groups, clubs and associations).

(4) Economics - the more a need is presented to them, the more likely they are to give (particularly important for appeals made around students in need, a connection with research they might be passionate about or a respected faculty member).

(5) Services philanthropic - those who feel value out of the programs and services offered as a post-graduate (often alumni associations offer further support, events, and other opportunities to connect, volunteer and stay involved with the institution well after graduation.

(6) Relationship marketing - alumni and students are viewed as customers, who see their relationship with the organization to be either transactional, or highly relational. Those who view it as highly relational feel connected, whereas those who view it as transactional view it as an exchange.

As a practitioner, in understanding how to connect with these motivations Bowden (2011) encouraged the relationship between institutions and marketing by concluding in her study that, colleges and universities need to "adopt a relationship approach to the marketing of higher-education services and to also view students that they serve as customers of their brands" (p. 222), with a focus on the long-term value of the relationship with students and alumni. However, as Kotler and Andreasen (1991) outline:

> Many of those who could use marketing principles do not do so because they do not see the relevance of marketing to their tasks. But we would argue that, in nonprofit organizations, public relations specialists, fund-raisers, volunteer recruiters, and employee supervisors are all at one time or another, marketers. And, as such, they can all benefit from understanding the philosophy and approach to marketing ... (p. 38).

Marketing to this student/alumni-customer relationship is shown in many studies as being beneficial, and by viewing an alumnus or alumna as a key relationship, donations to their alma mater become a demonstration of loyalty, similar to that by a repeat purchaser of a product in a for-profit organization. Oliver (1999) defines this customer loyalty in a modification of his own earlier definition as:

> A deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, *despite* situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior. (p. 34)

An expression of loyalty by a customer (or student and alumnus/alumna), can be marked by owning and wearing branded material of the institution, sending their children to that school, participating in programs and services offered once graduated, and, ultimately, by donating (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001, p. 22). Gallo (2012) further supports this research with a study that concluded that cultivating philanthropic giving was a part of a relationship-building cycle, one that begins with affiliation as a student, and then progresses to affinity, engagement and support stages.

McAlexander and Koenig (2001) studied the effect of the university experience on alumni support and found that alumni placed a high value on how challenged they were and how much fun they had while attending the institution. Most notably McAlexander and Koenig (2001) concluded that:

> The importance of the "experience" to loyalty-behaviour suggests that, as university administrators consider allocating tight budgetary resources, consideration should be given to investments in "student life." Funds allocated to such things as university teams, intramurals, clubs, the Greek system, and events (e.g., concerts and carnivals) should be viewed appropriately as more than simply expenses to increase short-term student enjoyment and satisfaction, but also as

investments into building present and future bonds with implications for long term loyalty. (p. 38)

Student experience in the context of relationship marketing is defined by McInnis (1997) as a social process where "the quality of the student experience has to do with the extent to which students' embraced the vibrant educational and social life that is supposed to represent the best the university has to offer" (p. 66). It is identified as an "appeal to the social as well as the intellectual role of a particular institution" (Price, et al., 2003, p. 220). Marketing cultural literature is discussed more around the ideas of message, image, and identity (e.g. Van Riel, 1995; Rebel, 1997), but as a practice, assumes that with the right message to an audience, you can gain favour with that group, which in this instance, as discussed earlier, is critical for students and alumni and their relationships with the institution.

Relationship marketing starts once a student begins their degree, and this stage of their life experience is assessed by the learning, assessment and teaching strategies, the quality of relationships they form with staff and students, and the friendships they make while on campus, which will then have a lasting impact on their relationships as alumni and fundraising (Wilcox, et al., 2005). These areas all help students and eventually alumni to gain meaningful connection with both the academic and social aspects of the institution (Wilcox, et al, 2005), and thus will be reviewed as it relates to their affinity to the institution as alumni, as they build trust with an institution over time.

Work by McAlexander and Koenig (2012) indicates that there is a significant relationship between integration within a community and attitudes developed towards philanthropic giving. Their work is supported by research done by Sanchez-Fernandez, Iniesta-Bonillo, Schlesinger-Diaz and Rivera-Torres (2010), which indicates that the quality of relationships formed while a student is at an institution, influences perceived value, loyalty and satisfaction. This important time to influence the relationship with a student and future alumni is critical to building the foundation for philanthropic giving and must be followed by a consistent transitional experience to alumni (McAlexander & Koenig, 2012).

Relationship and connection with an organization allows an organization to build a long-term opportunity to increase profits and donations. As found by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), marketers, fundraisers and communications professionals who are able to understand the structure:

> of a subculture of consumption can profit from serving its needs. In addition to providing necessary objects for the functioning of the subculture, marketers may also assist in the socialization of new members, facilitate communications within the subculture, and sponsor events that provide havens for the activities of the subculture. In return marketers may accrue increased customer loyalty, publicity, and consumer feedback, among other benefits. (p. 43)

Tedlow (1979) describes, that this relationship focused approach is not just a part of a marketing department, but a consideration for public relations and longer-term value for an organization, similar to the work of Schouten and McAlexander (1995). Tedlow (1979) goes on to write that this strong relationship with alumni becomes a “method for protection against the political consequences of a hostile public opinion that corporate public relations has been most influential... it grew into a tool for dealing with many publics" (p. 193). This all suggests then that the relationship that any post-secondary school forms with a student, is not just the sole interaction and function of the relationship. And in fact, with that being the start of the relationship, the later phases as alumni and supporter are of greatest value in the longer term.

Similarly, Gallo (2013) describes this as the four stages that alumni may involve themselves with their university or college, with the value being something that happens over the longer term then the time one studies at an institution. To then improve donor (and specifically alumni) commitment, post-secondary institutions would need to find ways to deepen the relationship with their students, so that they can facilitate what Gallo describes within these four stages. Gallo (2013) describes "these interactive opportunities are organised using an alumni relationship building cycle, allowing the alumni–university connection to evolve under the theme's affiliation, affinity, engagement and support" (pg. 1150).

Public Relations and Fundraising

As Meghan Morris (2006) discusses in her introduction to *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture,* there is a discussion often by media and culture theorists on the role that various media, mainly, journalism, film and television in her work, plays on the role of creating a culture, relationships or identity. Morris (2006) goes on to discuss cultural policy and asks:

> If cultural imperialism remains an issue in Australia, it is not because some Australian writers produce Gallicized prose or resort to un-Australian epistemologies, but because particular institutions – galleries, the music industry, universities, cinema distribution and exhibition chains, publishing companies – have a long history of confining Australian activities to a mimetic mode, and continue to monitor the limits – and the identity – of acceptably 'Australian' production. (p. 59)

Her question becomes important, as a way of thinking about how any nation has material foundations and frames of practice that are not formed in isolation, and how media and communication work within this structure.

Carey (2009) explains that communication is "the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control" (p. 2). To study and understand its influence then:

> involves examining the construction, apprehension, and use of models of communication themselves—their construction in common sense, art, and science, their historically specific creation and use: in encounters between parent and child, advertisers and consumer, welfare worker and supplicant, teacher and student. Behind and within these encounters lie models of human contact and interaction. (Carey, 2009, p. 14)

These structures and models that Carey (2009) and Morris (2006) discuss, in relation to the idea that the media control and shape who and what a society or group believes, are similar to the relationships that public relations has with audience and community, and as this chapter will discuss, the growth of public relations throughout history, has allowed it to become a central component to creating image and evoking emotions for a variety of results in various organizations and structures.

Edward Bernays is widely considered to be the 'father of public relations,' as he established the practice as more than just press agentry in the 1920s (Grunig, 2006). Bernays contended that in the early stages of public relations, the work was based on a need to understand what the public wanted, and in turn, what information an institution should share to gain support or favour (Bernays, 2019). He wrote that the practice of PR was based on the idea that the public might ask questions of an organization, leader, or group, and if the answer in word or action is not satisfactory, they will turn to another source (Bernays, 2019).

He therefore saw the job of a public relations practitioner of that time as one to build strategies and tactics to "best present one's view or products to a public" (Bernays, 2019, p. 17) in anticipation of a need or want. This led to years of work for Bernays in shaping opinion on a variety of topics including, the Railway in America, Trade Associations, The American Telephone and Telegraph Company, and even prominent political figures in New York (Bernays, 2019).

Bernays (2019) goes on to explain that through research and understanding of an audience, public relations practitioners have the specialized ability to "estimate group reactions on a large scale over a wide geographic and psychological area" (p. 30), which is still true of the practice today. Through this specialized knowledge Bernays established the practice as an intermediary to the press, a connection between an organization and the public, as he recognized it as a medium affecting public opinion (Bernays, 2019). The key strategies and tactics of the PR practitioner in Bernays' description align with the work of the practitioner in the last few decades, although the tools to achieve this success have changed. Since the time of Bernays, public relations as a practice have been considered within applied science and management disciplines (Pieczka & L'Etang, 2006).

Public Relations has always had a significant role in many postsecondary institutions and government, including but not limited to the recruitment of students, brand, and community building while they are on campus, and, ultimately, maintaining relationships after graduation. L'Tang (2015) reviews the history of public relations from as early as post colonization, and the impact and "dominance of a culturally specific explanatory framework based on specialist functions/paradigmatic features of PR work" (p. 657). He goes to say that public relations in government and school structures is a process of meaning generation and circulating and deciphering discourses, "ideas and networks linked to agency, structures, power, hegemony, ideology and communicative action" (L'Tang, 2015, p. 659). Historically there have been many embedded communications and public relations professionals working in the organizational structure of post-secondary institutions.

Public relations as a profession, works within the management aspect of the media and communications to share messages and organizational perspectives with various audiences and groups. This often exists within a power balance to control message, communicate, and share information, with the goal being a message that improves relationship and perspective for any organization with their audience. As Ashley and Tuten (2015) describe, public relations works to build a message that can focus on "matching the brand to consumer aspirations (image), insights and experiences (resonance, experiential) and feelings (emotional including love, sexual desire, fear, guilt, and joy/humour)" (p.18).

From a more communication and culture approach, and one that counters the work of public relations theory, we must look at the work of Baudrillard (1998), and Debord (1977), in relationship to image and creating spectacle for an audience.

In Debord's (1977), he introduces the concepts of the spectacle and the creation of the image by suggesting that:

> The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as an instrument of unification. As a part of society, it is specifically the sector which concentrates all gazing and all consciousness. Due to the very fact that this sector is separate, it is the common ground of the deceived gaze and of false consciousness, and the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of generalized separation.
>
> The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images. (p. 7)

Debord (1977) goes on to discuss the role of the machine of the spectacle and audience, in that the audience does not question or inquire to understand, but rather receives and sees images as presented, through this deceived gaze. It is within this discussion of this machine, that I believe the relationship to public relations and fundraising becomes the clearest, as there is a conscious structure of image selection, creating and manipulating the spectacle for an audience, aligning with many scholars in the work of image and fundraising (Gerrard, Farrugia, 2015; Lancione, 2014; Lapierre, 2021).

Within this similar context, Jean Baudrillard (1998) discusses image and the consumption of an image by an audience as:

> This careful balance between the discourse of 'news' [information] and the discourse of 'consumption', to the exclusive emotional advantage of the latter, tends to assign advertising a background function, to allot it the role of providing a repetitious, and therefore reassuring, backdrop of signs against which the vicissitudes of the world are registered through an intermediary. Those vicissitudes, neutralized by the editing, are then ripe, themselves, for simultaneous consumption. (p. 19)

He suggests that the images presented and received by the audience, must first be filtered through an intermediary, as he refers to it, a role or practice that decides what is seen and not seen before meeting with the gaze of an audience (Baudrillard, 1998),. He indicates that this relationship of media and the consumption of media is not image in a pure form, but rather a series of relationships based on what is shown, as done in public relations practice. Baudrillard (1998) later goes on to discuss how this is done on different modern media platforms, from radio to television, similar to the work of McLuhan (1989) in *The Global Village*, and how his theory of postmodernism simulacra illustrates a society where the media create their own reality, both in what they generate and what they become.

To see this then, specifically in fundraising and public relations practice, we could look to Chomsky (1988), and his thoughts as shared in *Language and Politics*. In his text Chomsky (1988) shares his thoughts on the American wars of the 1970's and says that the press filtered and deciphered images shared by the government, and in some cases, suppressed its true meaning of the image. He later talks about structures in politics and communications practice, as they work to conceal or alter images, to present one view or one perspective to an audience.

Chomsky (1988) uses the Vietnam War as an example, where large portions of the population tried to escape the ideological image presented, what is now known as "the Vietnam syndrome" (p. 301), where the media and political structure presented images of the War, that large portions of the American audience accepted as presented. The filtering of the images from the Vietnam War in this case, with the language and words used around them, and Alfredo Jaar's work discussed earlier of the Rwandan Genocide. For Chomsky (1988), the structure and system of language and politics filtered and detached elements of the image, in the same way that the black box acted to control what was viewable and detach the elements of Jaar's work.

One of the biggest parts about public relations practice is the image and words, equal to the symbols and installations that an artist creates to filter a reality or intolerable image. This becomes an important framework for understanding public relations intimate relationship with the image and message, as discussed by Baudrillard (1990), who says that:

> Journalists and publicists are manipulators of myth. They stage an object or event as fiction. They liberally interpret it-at the very limit; they deliberately construct it. And thus it is necessary, if one wants to judge them objectively, to apply the categories of myth: the latter is neither true nor false, and the question is not believing or disbelieving it. Whence this endless debate on two false problems: 1. Do publicists believe in what they do? (for which they could be partly forgiven). 2. Don't consumers truly believe in advertising? (from which they could be partly saved). (p. 93)

For Baudrillard (1990), signs are what motivate us, not reality, so public relations practitioners then have a key role in creating and deciphering the image, becoming the image maker and designer, while shaping the system it works within, ultimately shaping reality.

An example of this would be a well-known case with a large PR firm, Hill and Knowlton, during the 1990s, with Citizens for a Free Kuwait. In October of 1990, a young Kuwaiti girl testified before the US Congress about the horrors of living in Iraq, and what they were allegedly doing to the Kuwaiti citizens. Her testimony included a graphic story of how Kuwaiti babies were being taken out of incubators in hospitals and left to die by Iraqi soldiers, with detailed language and visualizations of what was allegedly occurring. After this testimony President Bush continued to bring up the story of the incubators in all of his public speaking events and media interviews. This was followed up by Senators voting in favour of war with Iraq, citing this story and images of the atrocities against the Kuwaiti babies.

It was later discovered that Hill and Knowlton were the PR agency in this case and were paid $10.5 million dollars by a group of wealthy Kuwaitis, to build a case for war with Iraq (Mickey, 1997). A few years later it was also discovered that the young girl who testified that she witnessed these killings was in fact the daughter of the Kuwait Ambassador to the US, and she may not have even been in Kuwait at the time (Mickey, 1997). In 1992, the Kroll Report came out and concluded that there were no slaughters of babies as indicated, and that in fact, the public relations firm had created the images and perceptions of reality to favour their client's goals and create emotions and support for a cause (Rowse, 1991). This indicates a direct correlation with the impact that public relations have, as an artist of the image and reality, for what is supported and what receives both financial and emotional support from a society.

The biggest challenge I believe than, in the intolerable image is the idea that this image must remain passive, and in this example could be challenging to argue how it remained so. As seen in the example above with Hill and Knowlton, PR can be, in a way, the artist that creates the image, or to use the phrasing "paint a picture" for an audience, but this image can be intended to elicit action, similarly as required within fundraising, or trying to show a need.

Miller and Dinan (2008) discuss the role of public relations and image beyond the historical perspectives of Chomsky and look closely at the relationship of public relations practice in politics, in their book, *Century of Spin*. Miller and Dinan (2008) present throughout their book the idea that public relations has played and continues to play a:

> significant role in the course of popular democracy over the last century. The powers of PR are not mysterious in the sense that they are magical or superhuman. They are all too human, the products of diligence, hard work, planning and conscious ideological warfare. They result in the institutional political corruption so obvious in neo-liberal societies, where governments are much more responsive to the concerns of big business and the powerful than any other section of society. (p. 1)

To further understand this history of language and image, and how they relate with the role of public relations, it is important to understand public relations as a practice, as described by Grunig (2006), in *Furnishing the Edifice*. In this work, he describes the theoretical framework of public relations, and the structured role of the practice including "how the public relations function should be structured and managed to provide the greatest value to organizations, publics, and society" (Grunig, 2006, p. 153). Grunig (2006) goes on to outline that public relations must be a part of the organizational structure so that it can "identify strategic publics as part of the strategic management process" (Grunig, 2006, p. 160), working as a part of the structure to write, create, filter and share messages of the organization. This structure and organizational position and process Grunig (2006) is referring to is similar in problem and form to that of Baudrillard (1998), however their perspectives are very different. They both approach this communications structure and systems as a way of filtering and controlling the flow of information and images, where Grunig's (2006) approach is more of function.

By positioning public relations (PR) within the organizational structure, public relations become in control of the message and image shared, meaning any organization would have a "critical characteristic of excellent public relations" (Grunig, 2006, p. 160). This would mean that any public relations practitioner in politics would be able to build and improve the relationship with the audience, while managing what is seen and unseen in the media structure. Public relations practitioners become the symbol makers as Mickey (1997) discusses, basing their work largely on manipulating words and images, in order to create (within a fundraising purpose) an image of need.

This structure and organizational position for public relations, as suggested by Grunig (2006) allows for strategy and communications with a focused goal and audience, while controlling the flow of information and images to create community. By including public relations (PR) in strategic management and organizational structure, Grunig's (2006) model allows public relations to be in control of the message and image shared, meaning any institutions would have a "critical characteristic of excellent public relations" (Grunig, 2006, p.160). This would allow a public relations practitioner to build and improve the relationship with the audience, while managing the image and reputation and perception of prestige. Public relations practitioners become the symbol makers as Mickey (1997) discusses, basing their work largely on the words and images that build relationship and community with an audience.

The role of public relations professionals in creating community is acknowledged and discussed further within this chapter. A framework by Kruckeberg and Starck (1988), is applied within this research, as they suggest that the role of public relations in community building:

> should be to encourage and to promote an understanding of its organizational goals through an interaction with citizens, whose sense of active contribution should be recognized by the organization through implementation and innovation results from citizen's contributions, including the organization's acts of social responsibility (Kruckeberg & Starck 1988, p. 175).

The relationship then, of fundraising with public relations, becomes clear when looking at the work from Kelly (2001), who explains that an organization "must demonstrate through their actions that they are worthy of supportive attitudes and behaviours" (p. 285), most clearly done as further explained, through the work of public relations. Kelly (1991) explained that in order for fundraising to be successful, it should be redefined as a specialization of public relations, as it manages the communication between the organization and its donors.

Hall (2002) defined that fundraising and public relations are similar because they both "seek to build mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their key stakeholders, albeit with a more narrowly defined set of stakeholders in the case of fundraising" (p. 368). This work is further supported by Miller (2009), who indicated that those who manage fundraising and donors have to shift their strategy from being a campaign manager to being community managers.

This relationship is supported by the work of Heath (2001), who detailed the ROPES process of public relations, meaning, research, objectives, programming, evaluation, originally discussed by Kelly (1991), with the addition of "S" representing stewardship. Heath (2001) went on to discuss the four elements of fostering a relationship, that is a part of an organization's overall strategy, which are reciprocity, responsibility, reporting, and relationship nurturing, which were also discussed in Hon and Grunig (1999) as symmetrical strategies that could be used to foster growth within an organization.

Specifically, as the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) outlines in their principles, any charity must work to ensure that each potential donor is "informed of the organization's mission, of the way the organization intends to use donated resources, and of its capacity to use donations effectively for their intended purposes" (Association of Fundraising Professionals, 2009, p. 1).

This goal coincides with the work of Cutlip, Center and Broom (1985), which identified common public relations objectives for non-profit work:

1. Earning public acceptance of an agency's missions, new ideas and new concepts.
2. Creating a favorable environment for fund raising activities.
3. Encouraging volunteerism in a climate where there is growing competition for people's time and energy.
4. Promoting programs and services for those who need them most.
5. Developing communication channels for the most disadvantaged groups in society. (p. 518)

Considering the close relationship between public relations and fundraising, it is important to note the work of Grunig (2006), who says, "organizations must communicate symmetrically with the different kinds of publics found within these stakeholder categories to develop high-quality, long-term relationships with them" (p. 159).

This cultivation of relationship is also discussed in Waters (2009), who detailed the increased importance organizations are putting on cultivation and stewardship of all donor types, and the impact of stewardship strategies on each. The importance of cultivating these relationships has long been studied, including work by O'Neil (2007), who found that "there is an association between public relationships and years of support – actual behavior – and between happiness to recommend others to donate and happiness to continue donating – intended behaviours" (p. 102).

With such strong research indicating a clear connection between stewardship of these relationships with donors and potential donors, and the work done in public relations, there is an opportunity to measure success in a way not as clear in other public relations practices (Leeper, 1996). Kelly (1991) goes on to explain that this connection between public relations and fundraising provides an opportunity to measure the success of public relations strategies with dollars raised, donor retention, and donor cultivation overall.

However, in order to run strategic public relations programs within not-for-profits that can then be measured effectively, Grunig (1997) detailed that an organization's management and culture must reflect the importance of any communication program. Ristino (2007) outlined how this is a shift in thinking and structure for many not-for-profits by explaining that: public relations have for its target all publics, both internal and external, that can affect, either negatively or positively, the organization's ability to survive and to succeed in its social environment.

This is further supported by McAlexander, Koenig and DuFault (2014), who advised that advancement professionals and communicators share a "common goal, to develop support for the institution" (p. 244). Their work presented a way to create a score for individuals in an existing database using an adjusted set of survey questions from the Hon and Grunig (1999) work, all based on relationship and fondness for an organization. This research placed values on communication information and interaction within the system design, in addition to personal information.

In describing the theoretical framework of public relations, Grunig (2006) explained the structured role as, "a general theory that explains how the public relations function should be structured and managed to provide the greatest value to organizations, publics, and society" (p. 153). Grunig goes on to outline that public relations must be a part of the organizational structure so that it can "identify strategic publics as part of the strategic management process" (p. 160). By including public relations in strategic management, an institution would have a "critical characteristic of excellent public relations" (Grunig, 2006, p.160), and will be able to build and improve long-term relationships (Grunig, 2006), which can include the student community.

James Grunig and Larissa Grunig (1998) published a well-known study on the work of public relations and its position in effective organizations and political structures called, *The Excellence Study*. This study, which has become a foundational work in the public relations field includes a diverse group of corporations, not-for-profits, government organizations and political systems, from a variety of countries including, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom (Grunig & Grunig, 1998). They found that organizations can create the most value and trust with their audience when using a public relations practitioner to make decisions about the direction and messages for an organization, because they are best suited for strategy and tactic development and have a firm understanding of the audience (Grunig & Grunig, 1998).

Within *The Excellence Study* (Grunig & Grunig, 1998), the findings demonstrated that:

> Organizations plan public relations programmes strategically when they identify strategic publics and use communication programmes to build stable, open and trusting relationships with them. Thus, the quality of these relationships is an important indicator of the long-term contribution that public relations makes to organization effectiveness. (p. 144).

The Excellence Study also concluded that the ideal scenario for excellent public relations in strategic management, meant that public relations was fully involved, "by scanning the social, political, and institutional environment of the organization to bring an outside perspective to strategic decision making" (Grunig, 2006, p. 162). As such, for the purpose of this study, the integration of public relations into the strategic management function will be a critical component to be reviewed, as it relates to any strategies for engaging students and alumni and improving communications and relationship building with the end result the work, being fundraising for the institution.

Institutions are unique from smaller scale not-for-profits, as they have the resources to employ full time communications professionals that should be able to manage the strategic role that Grunig and *The Excellence Study* outline (Kylander & Stone, 2012). This allows institutions and other large scale not-for-profits to form "broad, long-term social goals, while strengthening internal identity, cohesion, and capacity" (Kylander & Stone, 2012, p. 37). However, despite these resources, many researchers have concluded that communications often take place without planning and clear definitions of goals and objectives for building relationships with the various stakeholders (Liu, 2012; Holtzhausen, 2014).

A shift to stronger public relations management in universities and colleges is supported by the work of Tom and Elmer (1994), which shows alumni relationships have always played an important role in the operations of an institution. Bruning (2002), discussed how the relationship that colleges and universities form with students and alumni influence "perceptions, attitudes, evaluations, and behaviours" (p. 46) and ultimately if done well, can help to increase institutional revenues.

In practice this means that public relations become important considerations in the digital and social media spaces, as they have really become the tools of the practice in the last ten years. These digital tools as explained by Sévigny (2016) have elevated the field to a more strategic place of relationship management. For post-secondary institutions these tools and relationship management are most visible with the work of the communications teams in various departments.

Conclusion

Relationship marketing, organizational identification and the relationship with public relations and fundraising have long been studied and looked at by both academics and practitioners. The challenge often in these larger institutions is bringing together a consistent strategy across multiple platforms and departments on a variety of channels.

Within cultural theorists, public relations is a field of participants in a media field, working to be effective on message in a larger media system. As an example, Morris (2006) defines public relations practitioners as:

> ...people who act anecdotally (occasionally, momentarily, eventfully) as active participants in media fields, as well as those who want to work professionally as journalists, programmer-makers and pundits. For this, competence is important; to be effective, such action requires aesthetic skills as well as social knowledge that neither conflict nor wholly overlap with those needed to study audiences, media ownership or the impact of new technologies, just as these, in turn are not wholly interchangeable with the skills and knowledges required to formulate and effect cultural policies. (p. 23)

Public relations as a practice have often been related to the formulation of, and with an effect on, cultural policies, and as Miller and Dinan (2003) explain, it has a history that is “intimately linked with power and capital” (p. 193). Within the context of the work by Kelly (1991), the role of public relations and consequently fundraising should be considered in the larger system, and the role that they jointly play in the formation of and the effect on, fundraising success, particularly within educational institutions in North America. When considering this important axis, public relations and fundraising have substantial impact on the educational system for communities, and so their role becomes important in the health of the areas that they operate within, similar to the work by Miller and Dinan (2008).

The task of bringing together a strategy for the life cycle of a student, to alumnus/alumna, to donor is a complicated one. And as other researchers have discussed above, this means that not-for-profits must work to be more innovative and creative in their strategy, as the challenge in this environment requires communications and fundraising professionals to develop a diverse approach to build relationships with stakeholders (Weerawardena, et al., 2010; Choi, 2014). Using this strategy as a base, I put forward that it is critical to take the foundational work established by Grunig (2006, 1998), McAlexander, et al., (2012, 2014), and Cialdini et al., (1976) in account, to better understand how to incorporate a strategy for philanthropic success in an era where networks and relationships guide a community.

When brands work to build engagement as a key strategy, whether online or in traditional communications forms, then the brand’s message can shift from being just transactional to a point where brands become a part of an audience’s identity (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). Marketers and communications professionals must work to create creative content in these forms, as they have a chance to enhance a receiver’s motivation, ability to process information and opportunities (MacInnis, et al., 1991). This becomes a unique space for institutions like universities and colleges to participate in, since they can engage audiences for years as students (assuming 2 to 4 years as an undergraduate as an example), and then continue those relationships as alumni to continue building community and identity that creates long term value for the institution.

When looking at each of the institutions in this study and working to understand their communications strategy, it is important to not just think through the work of the singular post or the smaller campaigns, but to analyze if the content is working to evoke emotions and build relationships like discussed earlier. These post-secondary institutions become a corporate brand, and thus, their strategy and implementation of a plan become important for a diverse group of stakeholders (Chapleo, et al., 2011). There are many ways to look at a communications strategy and review the message and executional factors using a variety of typologies within these brands and their communications channels (Laskey, Day & Crask, 1989; Johar & Sirgy, 1991).

Additionally, there are many studies that evaluate the brand and psychological outcomes associated with creative appeals and communications strategies (Schmitt, 2012). In this dissertation, I do not attempt to review the vast literature on these creative strategies and implementation, but rather to apply a simpler content analysis of communications by a group of institutions, in addition to source, similar to the work of Ang and Low (2000). Using the model of relationship-orientation as presented by Jahn and Kunz (2012), the content and communication strategy will refer to satisfaction of any social interaction provided by the content.

The research presented here demonstrates that if, as described above, an institution is able to work on their student relationships, and in turn continue that connection with their alumni and community, they will be more likely to have success as indicated in the work by Kelly (1991) and others. By applying these principles, not-for-profits, including post-secondary institutions will be able to engage in strategic communication across platforms, digitally and traditionally, to have meaningful engagement with stakeholders (Saxton & Waters, 2014; Ihm, 2015; Guo & Saxton, 2018; Campbell & Lambright, 2019).

Because of this influence on the overall financial health and prosperity of a university or college, many researchers have compared this exchange to relationship marketing, including Bowden (2011). In an article titled *Engaging the Student as a Customer: A Relationship Marketing Approach*, Bowden (2011) encouraged the relationship between institutions and marketing, indicating that colleges and universities need to "adopt a relationship approach to the marketing of higher-education services and to also view students that they serve as customers of their brands" (p. 222).

Donations and monetary gifts in fundraising have many different factors in the decision-making process for any donor, and I put forward that the relationship with the organization and the brand as Bowden (2011) explains, is the most key consideration in this decision. This idea is further supported by Pearce (2014), and my research is a review and critique of this approach, through the lens of public relations, relationship marketing and organizational identification best practices, and will serve as an opportunity to understand how to best improve these relationships over time. As the work presented in this chapter demonstrates, the foundational work on community and relationships with organizations is not a new idea or concept, but rather a part to the public relations and relationship marketing fields that is continuing to grow and develop. As the next chapter will discuss, this foundational element established here only continues and becomes a greater consideration for success for any organization as they work to mirror those relationships online and in digital communities.

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL CAPITAL AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES

"When literally everyone has a 'voice' controlling the dialogue, discussion, and debate, the resulting advantage is credibly powerful. Customers and employees now determine what gets made and what gets implemented, causing companies to rethink the entire business model and relationship spectrum". Regina Luttrell, 2018, p. xxi

Online Communities and Relationships

In the previous chapter the discussion around creating communities and the role that post-secondary institutions play in communities was presented. To truly understand the more modern elements of community, it is also important to understand the earlier definitions of community and community spaces. In Ray Oldenburg's (1999) book, *The Great Good Place* (1999), he discusses the places that exist in every person's life and qualifies them into three main areas; the place we live, the place we work, and the third place, we gather for friendship and company. Oldenburg (1999) discussed this change in a more modern concept and went on to say that:

> In order for the city and its neighborhoods to offer the rich and varied association that is their promise and potential, there must be neutral ground upon which people may gather. There must be places where individuals may come and go as they please, in which no one is required to play host, and in which we all feel at home and comfortable. (p. 22)

Post secondary institutions offer just this type of place, where students can come together in a neutral place to find comfort and company. Oldenburg (1999) further explains that it is within these places that we form communities, and that these types of places take the place of the traditional community places like cafes, barber shops and pubs (Oldenburg, 1999).

This dissertation applies a practical public relations definition of community, with a sociologist's approach to better understand the aspects of community relationships that are formed on postsecondary campuses, using the interactions between people, beyond a community of physical place. This application of community suggests that each person can find their own sense of community based on friendship and neighbouring, where they maintain relationships now in a more modern sense through direct contact, phone, mail, or more recent digital connections like email, chats and discussion groups, as later described by Wellman in his book, *Networks in the Global Village* (1999).

The computer, and the opportunity that exists within online spaces for community, have given a way for people to connect and come together digitally, both when they are a student, but also once they leave campus. Licklider, Taylor and Herbert (1968), were early researchers in the computer as a communications tool, and worked to understand how this machine could create communities online. Their work later resulted in their creation of ARPANET in the 1960s, which some refer to as the first online community, for the American Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) (Licklider, et al., 1968). Licklider, et al., (1968) go on to share their advanced understanding of the potential for these online communities and indicated that:

> In most fields they will consist of geographically separated members, sometimes grouped in small clusters and sometimes working individually. They will be communities not of common location, but of common interest. In each field, the

overall community of interest will be large enough to support a comprehensive system of field-oriented programs and data. (p. 37)

This research provides a starting point for understanding how those individuals connected to a common place, like a university or college, can remain connected to that community well after they have left the geographic place. Early into their research on these virtual communities, Licklider, et al., (1968), discussed how online communities and spaces would allow people to connect more with people of common interests and goals regardless of proximity, as well as making communications more effective and enjoyable for users. This is later supported by the work of Hillier (2002), who referred to this digital neighbourhood as the interest-based communities, replacing space-based communities, where neighbourhood has a different context beyond the physical concepts.

Although institutions have been around for many decades, the innovation of online communities and digital spaces is considered newer. It was throughout the 1970s and 1980s the speed at which the technology for online communities and the technology of computers evolved at a rapid rate. The 1970s brought the creation of the personal computer, which allowed developers to connect individual computers and users in a workspace through Local Area Networks (LANs), using an Ethernet cable (Rheingold, 2000). With Ethernet technology, networks expanded to include more diverse networking and groups, furthering the rapid growth rate of the community and networks connected online beyond initial expectations (Rheingold, 2000). This fast growth meant that the NET community on ARPANET expanded from a few thousand, to millions, with a large sharing of data and information through these online communities and spaces in a relatively short period of time (Rheingold, 2000).

This change in the 1970’s and 1980’s meant that a growing number of individuals could form connections over greater and greater distances as the technology advanced. Howard Rheingold (2000) looked at this relationship between physical space and virtual communities and networks more in his book, *Virtual Community*, a review of both the history of online communities prior to 1990, but also his early involvement in different digital tools. In his book, Rheingold (2000) takes a critical look at the relationships we form online, and how “people in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind’ (p. 3). His work is based on early internet community models he was working within, including a system called Whole Earth ’Lectronic Link (WELL), an online public bulletin board based across North America (Rheingold, 2000).

This formation of WELL, is similar to the social media sites that many people use on a regular basis today. Within the earlier discussion about the WELL, Rheingold (2000) indicates that the connectedness that the internet community offered, allowed individuals outside of traditional communities and nearness geographically, to form new bonds and relationships that occasionally extended outside of the WELL, but for the most part exclusively existed in an online space (Rheingold, 2000). He explains:

> the WELL is a small town, but now there is a doorway in that town that opens onto the blooming, buzzing confusion of the NET, and entity with properties

altogether different from the virtual villages of a few years ago. (Rheingold, 2000, p. xxv)

In Canada, this technological advance happened in a similar timeline, although it was not until the 1980's that Canadians found the technology reaching their homes specifically, with open internet networks (Murphy, 2002). In Canada this developed more widely in the 1990's with FreeNets, a system that allowed "users a text-based electronic environment where they could move around as if visiting the buildings of the resources available in a town" (Murphy, 2002, p. 35). This system required signing up for a free account that would be used for personal use only, limiting companies, families or even sharing login among friends, ensuring that the community is made up of individuals, similar to what you would find in a physical neighbourhood (Murphy, 2002). As the number of accounts online grew, so did the internet availability across the country, especially within larger cities.

This demonstrates that the opportunity to connect online in Canada, with individuals with shared interests and beliefs was rapidly expanding in the 1990's, as access grew. In fact, by the late 1990's, Canada had the largest number of FreeNets relative to its population, allowing access to information with local relevance for users (Telecommunications Canada, 1994). Individuals in Canada seemed to enjoy having access to building community links and relationships online with other like-minded users beyond their physical space. The heavy saturation of these networks and digital spaces so early in the internet history, indicated a keen interest in virtual communities in Canada, as a space where "human practices will move to virtual reality where the physical aspects of the actual conduct become archaic makers of the former physical world (Murphy, 2002).

The virtual community network has since developed to include what we now know as social media sites and personal sharing networks. Similar in design to the concepts of ARPANET and WELL, these social media sites allow individuals to find and connect with people of like-mindedness regardless of physical location, through features similar to likes, commenting, sharing and friends lists. Murphy's (2002) work was furthered by Johnson and Halegoua (2014), who indicated that these "popular social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook and Twitter (now called X), are compatible with 'place' or what neighborhood associations and their residents desire and expect from neighborhood communication and relationships" (p. 52).

It is clear that the relationships that people form within more traditional communities as discussed earlier, has transferred now to more digital relationships, where people at a greater distance geographically are able to come together with others over shared interests and experiences. As Rheingold (2000) explains in his introduction to *Virtual Communities*, "whenever CMC [computer mediated communications] technology becomes available to people anywhere, they inevitably build virtual communities with it, just as microorganisms inevitably create colonies" (p. xx). Smith and Kollock (1999) further defined these virtual communities as spaces that have grown out of adapted technology, as networks that were constructed by individuals and groups of individuals, using e-mails, news groups, clubs and chat rooms, formally and informally, for the purpose of exchange.

Rheingold (2000) further details the practical uses of virtual communities as a space to use words on a screen to exchange knowledge, support, commerce, love and others, and do just about everything people do in real life, without the boundaries of physical space. The phenomenon of virtual communities comes out of a desire by people around the world for a feeling and sense of community, as a way of “both making contact with and maintaining a distance from others” (Rheingold, 2000, p. 11). Virtual communities then become a way to get to know people and their passions, to form new relationships online, but also strengthen existing relationships started in a physical space (Rheingold, 2000).

The internet has had a significant impact on the relationships and communities that are formed in a more modern era, and the way people connect with others becomes more challenging but can also create opportunity. Benkler (2006) referred to the effect of the Internet on community and personal relationships in two main ways. In the first, he indicates that social networks allow us to thicken “pre-existing” (p. 37) relationships with family, friends and neighbours in our communities. The second way he describes relationships in social networks is loose-ties or “loose relationships” (Benkler, 2006, p. 37). These communities online become ways for us to seek peer relationships of our own, using groups and other online social networks to connect with people with a shared passion or interest.

However, modern communities and relationships formed within them does mean that the loose relationships can build deeper bonds and connections, and ultimately share information and further contacts. These relationships don’t fit the ideal virtual community as presented by Rheingold (2000) and others, nor do they fit the concepts of community as a human's primary source of support, but they are meaningful and effective to the users as concluded by Benkler (2006). The meaningful relationships online allow the networks of average social users to easily spread information within and across a social network, with the credibility that would normally be associated with information shared between peers for a perceived value that is equal to word of mouth (Kerr, et al., 2012; Porter & Golan, 2006; Trusov, et al., 2009). This value in word of mouth becomes important to consider in the context of this work, suggesting that what is done online by any organization and institution and is an important consideration for any strategy for success.

One example of Benkler's (2006) community in practice and the social word of mouth discussed by others, was a study by Castillo et al. (2014), where donors who completed an online donation were randomly asked to share their donation with their social network on Facebook. This share was offered as a one-click solution, where donors completed their own donation and could post pre-generated content or send a private message to a friend letting them know about their donation (Castillo, et al., 2014). They found that on average, 1.2% of peer-to-peer donations resulted in a new donation to the charity (Castillo, et al., 2014).

As discussed earlier, in the early days of mass philanthropy discussed earlier, people would go door-to-door to solicit donations for their causes and tragedies within their communities. Even national fundraising campaigns like the March of Dimes in the 1890s went to small towns and big cities with legions of volunteers paired with leaders within each community (Tillotson, 2009). Campaigns such as the March of Dimes represent the early days of crowdsourcing and peer-to-peer fundraising, using social capital for social good. Having leaders in the community ask for support on behalf of the March of Dimes, rather than a stranger or a business activated community leaders to use their influence to encourage others to donate, which marked the measurement of their social capital in the community.

Having community leaders ask for support with success is now also true online, where people are taking their strong and loose-ties to others as Benkler (2006) describes, to encourage others to donate or contribute to their communities. Putnam (2000) finds that these online interactions were inferior to the face-to-face described in the March of Dimes example, but it shows that the impact of crowdsourcing, slacktivism, and online donation is a significant demonstration of the opportunity that exists within online networks.

The findings by Benkler (2006) related to online interactions and opportunity is supported by the work of Wellman, et al. (2001), who indicated that Internet relationships and usage, supplements any existing face-to-face relationships. Online giving and sharing functions therefore allows for charities to leverage the social capital of the people they have connections with, similar to their face-to-face relationships, and these donations and the results from the number of shares for those donations reflects the social influence and value of interpersonal relationships.

It is a critical consideration for any organization that is working in an online space to encourage sharing and recommendations, and this is of even greater importance for not-for-profits working to solicit donations. O'Neil (2007) found a relationship between the happiness to donate to an organization and then, in turn, to recommend donating to it to others. O'Neil's (2007) work was based on a more traditional understanding of donating and has not yet been tested within the digital space.

In the last decade, a growing number of digital tools and online platforms have been developed for fundraisers and not-for-profits, including the concepts of crowdsourced funding, where users can share a fundraising initiative and complete an entire campaign digitally, through their own networks. The research in this essay aligns with the work by O'Neil (2007) and Benkler (2006), as demonstration that a greater understanding of the dynamics of our changing online communities, as explored by Gruzd, et al., (2016), could significantly influence fundraising models with these new platforms for campaigns.

Online communities and ties to a particular community that are created within these networks have become increasingly influential in shaping various aspects of society, beyond just social networking, including fundraising efforts and strategy (Storer, 2021). The use of social media platforms for fundraising has become a key factor in many not-for-profit strategies to engage donors and potential donors, and using these platforms is particularly evident in North America where individuals, small grassroots organizations and larger scaled not-for-profits have embraced online tools (Albanna, 2022). Crowdsource funding campaigns become a strong example of the power that exists within social networking online, allowing a growing number of individuals and organizations of various sizes to engage in fundraising efforts online (Kim, 2017).

Social Capital

Putnam's concept of social capital has three main considerations, as described by Siisiainen (2003); first, moral obligations and norms, second, social values (especially trust) and finally social networks, which will be the focus of this chapter. It is important to note that there is an older concept of social capital, as presented by Pierre Bourdieu, where the three considerations for capital are cultural, economic, and social capital. However, within this work, Bourdieu focuses on conflicts and power to influence an interest as social capital, or as described by Siisiainen (2003), “social capital becomes a resource in the social struggles that are carried out in different social arenas or fields” (p.184).

For this reason, I will approach this chapter with Putnam’s approach to the concept of social capital as I believe it applies to this work and the work happening in digital communities. For example, in Putnam’s (1993) explanation of the social networks within social capital, he explains that social interaction, work and communication between participants can increase value, foster reciprocity and facilitates communication and trust in communities, which I believe represents what we see digitally now, and will form the basis for this chapter.

Putnam (2000) presents social capital as a theory that demonstrates that “social networks have value” (p. 19) and could be measured by the connections among individuals. His main theory in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Putnam, 2000) demonstrates that we hit a period of civic malaise at the end of the 20th century as people became less connected to their communities based on participation rates, membership and involvement in local groups. He indicated that civic malaise was caused by several things, but most significantly that the rise of greater malaise occurred with the technological advances of television and the Internet (Putnam, 2000). He believes these technologies created an individualization that eroded connection to communities, and thus eroded social capital (Putnam, 2000).

It can be argued, however, that his work has several flaws and presents a dystopian view of the Internet and its communities. In particular, the way Putnam measured social capital can be disputed. In Putnam's (2000) research he reviewed survey responses looking at rates of volunteering, club membership clubs and church attendance --all aspects of community in the physical space (or participatory capital as referenced by Wellman, et al., 2001). Putnam did not however, account for a sense of community and belonging offered by the Internet and connected online communities, as found by other scholars including Wellman (1999; 2001); nor did Putnam account for the loose ties in our social relationships demonstrated by Benkler (2006), Wellman (1999), Lin (2002). Given these flaws in Putnam's model of social capital, I have chosen, in this research, to subscribe to the model of social capital as presented by Lin (2002), who claims that social capital can be "measured by embedded resources in social networks" (p. 211).

This chapter will approach social capital and relationships online as a strictly relational asset, apart from collective assets, while trying to avoid commoditizing human relationships (Rheingold, 2000). The collective assets, though still important but would be defined as "assets and resources available to the collective through either relationship within the social structure of the collective (i.e., group or organization) or network relationships that span boundaries to other collectives, and through which the collective many benefit" (Payne, et al., 2011, p. 497).

Relational assets however will be applied here as defined in the work of Lin (2002) who says, "social capital consists of resources embedded in social relations and social structure, which can be mobilized when an actor wishes to increase the likelihood of success in a purposive action" (p. 24). Social capital, as defined in Lin's (2002) paper, allows people to draw on networks, social trust, and norms to solve problems and create social relations in achieving goals.

Indeed, in Lin's (2002) models the denser the network, the more volume or capital one has within their online network and relationships, as found to be consistent in the work by Chan and Li (2010). Similarly other researchers have found that social capital with this definition becomes vital for fundraising and not-for-profit organizations (Motion, et al., 2015; Xu & Saxton, 2019). This framework of social capital becomes important for this work because it allows a perspective that sees online relationships as a place for making impactful change in society, an important aspect for not-for-profits working in an online space.

According to Lin (2002), "two avenues are available for turning resources into capital: processing by institutionalizing organizations or using resources embedded in social networks" (p. 191). If we use social media management effectively for fostering relationships and increasing overall social capital, we will be able to maximize the "life-time value for the organization" (Ang, 2011, p. 32). "With tracking methodologies, organizations can also find out who is the most influential in the community. These opinion leaders can then be carefully nurtured" (Ang, 2011, p. 35) --for a not-for-profit nurturing opinion leaders can mean a unique opportunity to gain value out of the social capital these community members carry.

Work by Obar et al. (2012) on the Internet and online tools for advocacy groups found that online relationships empowered groups by, "helping them to connect with a multitude of individuals ranging from members and supporters to those who have never heard of the organization before" (p. 14). This empowerment and connection improve potential reach for online communities, creates an opportunity and scale for mass appeals in leveraging social capital that has not yet been realized, but one that presents a unique potential for not-for-profits (Weerawardena & Sullivan-Mort, 2001).

Social capital is "capital captured through social relations" (Lin, 2002, p. 19), and through connections and access to resources in the network, one can enhance outcomes by connecting with an actor's resources. Lin details how this enhances outcomes in social capital overall in four main ways, and I have Lin's (2002) work and approach as an intersection to how social capital helps fundraising in online communities.

First, the flow of information online and in online communities allows for a connection for individuals to an organization or a community, similar to the work of Obar, et al. (2012). The information shared in online spaces presents a chance to know more about an audience or interest that one may not otherwise be aware of. An example of this from fundraising might be an individual who connects with their online community and shares a cause they are involved with that might be of interest to their network. This would suggest that if an organization took time to understand those that follow and build online relationships with them, they would build out a greater network of those who are actively showing an interest in the causes that they are looking for support for.

Second, social ties may influence other actors in a similar network, similar to the early fundraising models and building relationships with families like the Rockefeller family and the Ford family, where others in similar social circles felt influenced. For fundraisers, influence can mean that connecting with individuals who have influence within their network and community, may provide a greater return on the initial donation. If, as in the first instance an organization takes the time to understand who is following and engaging with their content, they may also be able to identify those that have larger social networks themselves as potential influencers to a previously untouched network, one that can learn about the organization and the work that they are doing through their personal connection.

Third, social credentials as Lin (2002) describes, could help a not-for-profit focus on connecting with a select community or group for success. Social credentials mean that connecting with one well connected actor in a community could give access to resources and capital beyond just one person's worth, similar to the findings of Castillo, et al. (2014) and Ang (2011). As referenced in the earlier example, if the organization can identify those that are a more well-connected actor in a particular social community, they may be able to have that individual influence their network to give or participate in the organization, leveraging their social credentials for a greater good.

Finally, effective positioning of online campaigns and reporting back on the success of the campaign to individuals from their efforts can contribute to reinforcement, assuring one of their worth and influence in their network. By taking the suggestions about and working to improve and understand those within a social following for being well connected in their social networks, a not-for-profit could create a campaign and strategy that could be measured over time. This type of campaign would create targeted outreach and measurement based on the social engagement of each individual in their community.

An example in the for-profit space would be similar to work of many successful ecommerce sites that encourage reviews, posts and shares with each purchase made. Lin (2002) uses e-commerce as an example of social capital to demonstrate the opportunity that social capital has as a tool to go beyond simple information sharing. Lin (2002) goes on to say that "access to information in conjunction with interactive facilities makes cybernetworks not only rich in social capital, but also an important investment for participants' purposive actions in both the production and consumption markets" (p. 215). If similar e-commerce tools are applied to online fundraising, donation platforms could act as a tool for building social capital beyond the information sharing Lin (2002) refers to. This opportunity then would allow people to share, comment and engage in digital interactions that would encourage information sharing about the not-for-profit or the cause that one has donated to, ultimately expanding the network potential for the charity.

For example, the prevalence of online charitable giving platforms over the last decade has led fundraisers to increasingly issue two-part solicitation requests from potential donors, asking individuals to contribute both financial and social capital to the charity by sharing the information about their donation with their networks, as in the aforementioned example (Castillo, et al., 2014). Unfortunately, because the industry has had a slower response than a for profit industry may have, the overall technical ability and ease of use has not been as successful, and for many not-for-profits, they have not been able to invest time and money in this type of opportunity.

This does not mean that there are not some areas of easy growth and expansion for a not-for-profit in a digital space with some ease. As mentioned earlier, the work of Obar, et al., (2012), presents some of the potential opportunities that exist within online communities, including the potential to reach a new audience that was not possible before for some organizations through more traditional communications strategies. This new and more connected audience reach is further supported in the work done by Ganley and Lampe (2009) and others, whose research shows that the development and success of communities by brands for social capital, especially in virtual spaces, create a large impact for the business community. This connects to work by Putnam (2000) who explains, social capital can be grouped into two categories: 'bridging’ and ‘bonding’, where bridging represents those with different backgrounds who make connections on social networks, and bonding represents those with similar backgrounds, but they form a closer personal connection and relationship, a common element used by many organizations who are successful in digital communities.

In practice, this concept of bridging and bonding can be seen in the work of Facebook in 2017, when they created a platform specific to philanthropic gifts and fundraising (Vitak, et al., 2011). This allowed Facebook users to ask their friends and family to donate to a specific organization and charity. In studying bridging and bonding with this tool, Guest and McGloin (2021), looked at the individuals and network characteristics of those who donated to the Facebook campaigns. Within this study they found that those who donate to Facebook fundraising campaigns score higher overall on altruism, social capital, and self-monitoring, and overall are more motivated to donate by the perceived genuineness of a post made by the individual they are connected with, their relationship with their organization and as an act of demonstrating their own goodwill with their network (because their donation was made public) (Guest and McGloin, 2021).

It is important to note that a great deal of the research on social capital has focused on advocacy groups on social media, but many of the principles remain important to consider in the context of social capital and peer-to-peer fundraising, as demonstrated by the Facebook example earlier. There are many groups of people that connect online through shared interests and experiences, with informal and sometimes indirect ties as Putnam outlines (2000). These diverse online connections can then be turned into “social capital when an actor activates and mobilizes a particular chain of ties for the purpose of pursuing purposive actions” (Lin, 2002, p. 193), such as raising money for an organization. Within fundraising, collecting donations through connections is referred to as peer-to-peer fundraising, a way to solicit donations between individuals (Castillo, et al., 2014).

Branded Communities - Paid, Earned, Shared and Owned

Similar to the changing landscape of online donations in since the mid 2000’s, the branding strategy and work done by organizations in their online space has become a critical component to overall business success. Much research has been done in the area of online communities and brands, and there have been a lot of connections found between the interactions in brand communities, and their influence on the members and followers' attitudes and behaviour regarding the brand (Algesheimer, et al., 2010). As found by Zaglia (2013) and others, “brand communities represent highly valuable marketing, innovation management, and customer relationship management tools” (p. 216).

Peters (2010), described mass media as a challenge overall for audience consumption and attention, as:

> "The public" has always been a mix out of which various subgroups may be summoned, and mass media need not always address all; they can also address some. They often speak "to whom it may concern," acknowledging an imperfect fit between the actual and intended audience: this form of address authorizes receivers to ignore stray messages. (p. 269)

In this respect, digital and social media specifically allows for a targeted and direct messaging approach, as data and online communities are able to work through understanding both the audience and the way that it would be best for them to receive the message, thus improving relationships.

As brands and online communities expand, and the impact of relationships have continued to grow and be influential, social media has become the key tool to consider in this new element of community. Social media as defined by Mangold and Faulds (2009):

> encompasses a wide range of online, word-of-mouth forums including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer e-mail, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs), and social networking websites. (p. 358)

Social media includes online channels that allow users to share and participate in activities and content and have become an important way for organizations to attract and communicate with different audiences and segments (Murdough, 2009), who desire informativeness and entertainment as suggested in work by Luo (2002). Within this type of social media, organizations have come to understand the power that exists with direct access to their audiences, while also seeing the impact that audiences have to share and leverage their own social capital in sharing their brand and experiences (Ramsey, 2006). In 2023 advertisers in the US alone will spend $65.3 billion across all social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and X (Willens, 2023).

Many researchers have referred to this type of relationship building and social networking as the online version of social capital (Abbas & Mesch, 2018). Additionally, regular social media usage has been positively connected to higher social capital (Utz & Muscanell, 2015). Consequently, this has forced marketers, public relations professionals, and fundraisers to develop a consistent way to incorporate social media into their marketing and communications strategies and campaigns (Li & Bernoff, 2008). For the purpose of this research, social media will exclusively refer to social networking sites, and in this instance will be limited to X (called Twitter during this study period), Facebook and Instagram.

This way of looking at social media becomes a more modern approach to legacy media that both copies, shapes and reshapes what we know as more traditional media (Dobson & Knezevic, 2018). These online channels allow marketers and communications professionals to create branded social content and campaigns that provide touchpoints with an audience that can help deepen relationships, uncover feedback and themes their audience shares, and potentially persuade an audience to engage with the brand (Murdough, 2009). The thoughts, perceptions, feelings and experiences from these digital touchpoints with consumers allow a brand to then build association and memory for their target audience (Keller, 2009).

The central component for most successful communications strategies develops out of a mix of content types within these social channels. Where previously communicators calculated views by how many people were in the circulation of a printed communication, or estimated viewers, in this digital space, organisations look at the counts for likes, tweets, now X posts, shares and followers to measure engagement and success on social media platforms (Lovejoy, et al., 2012).

The dynamics then of paid, earned (controlled), shared and owned (uncontrolled) social media content, or the PESO model, has become a critical component for campaigns with various organizations, and is a well-defined model in the field (Luttrell, 2018; Keller, 2016). The PESO model for any organization, allows them to engage with their audience, promote their brand and work, and drive growth from more than one line of communication and tactic, and was created in 2014 by Gini Dietrich, but earlier had been referred to by Burcher (2012) as a "media trinity" (p. 4), as shown in image to the right.

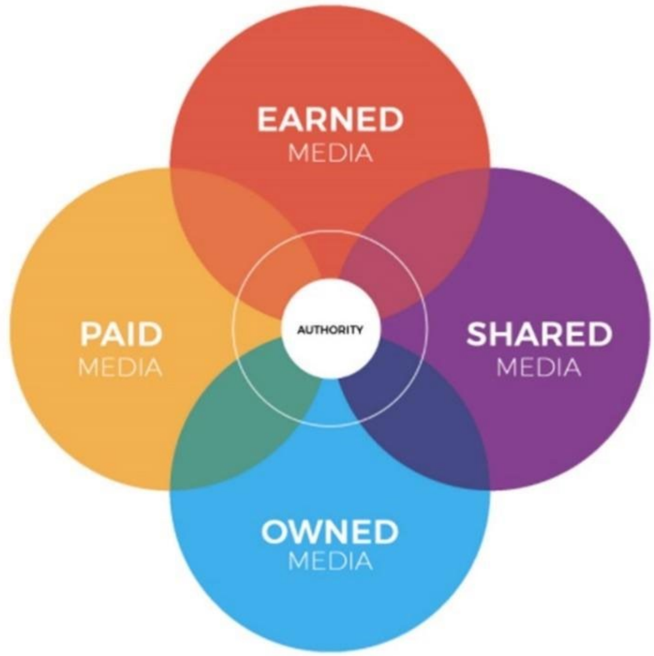

Figure 3: PESO Model by Gini Dietrich (2014)

Paid media refers to the content that brands and organizations pay to have displayed on social media platforms, often with specific targets and outreach for a specific audience, this can also be referred to as boosted content (Dietrich, 2014). This includes sponsored content, display advertisements, influencer marketing campaigns, and other paid advertising on any social media platform. These advertisements as detailed by Asquith and Fraser (2020), allow for paid content to "seamlessly blend into the flows of digital content rather than interrupting user experience, like a pop-up ad, pre-roll ad, or television commercial break" (pg. 5730). There is often a goal with this paid advertising, to not only increase brand visibility, but to also reach a broader audience for brand recognition, or drive traffic to a specific action like a website or account (Canter, et al., 2013).

Leveraging this type of paid media becomes a critical piece to social media strategy, as brands continue to struggle to find ways to amplify their reach, target specific audiences and drive results for their campaign success (Rakić & Rakić, 2015). Social media platforms have algorithms that favour paid media, and they offer sophisticated targeting and tools that enable success, however many brands struggle to find the right balance between paid advertisements and organic reach, as they don't want to overwhelm their audience and seem inauthentic in building a sincere relationship (Canter, et al., 2013).

Earned media is known as more organic or free media, driven by the mentions or user-generated content a brand receives on social media (Luttrell, 2018). This can be done through positive customer reviews, testimonials, posts that customers or followers share about you or shares of posts not done by the brand (Colicev, et al., 2018). There is a variety of literature on this type of content, where it indicates that the greatest value in social networks exists in user generated and user centred content (Chi, 2011). This type of consumer behaviour, with sharing and mentioning a brand within their own network, is called influence impressions, and are the most desired and valued by marketers (Li & Bernoff, 2008).

This earned media, as explained by Lutrell (2018), is a direct result of the relationships and reputation that a brand builds over time and the engaging content that they may create, and the customer experiences, with the hope that people may feel compelled to share, both positive and negative (Colicev, et al., 2018). Unlike paid media, in earned there is no direct control or purchase that the organization can make, however there are several strategies to try to encourage this type of media, similar to the discussion earlier on having donors share their donations within their own community (Kerr, et al., 2012).

Cultivating this type of earned media is demonstration of a brand's true credibility and their reputation among their audience (Rakić & Rakić, 2015). In order to achieve this, organizations and brands focus on delivering either their product, service or brand in a way that is engaging for their audience, allowing meaningful interactions and valuable content (Colicev, et al., 2018). Brands often create this type of user-generated content through contests, hashtags or brand challenges so that they can boost their own brand further (Luttrell, 2018). By acknowledging and appreciating customers and followers that share positive experiences with the brand, any organization can see who their most active and engaged fans are, allowing them to utilize them as brand advocates in future, organically improving trust and visibility (Colicev, et al., 2018).

Shared media revolves around social sharing, when users and community members share a brand's content with their own social media circles (Luttrell, 2018). This allows any organization to expand their reach beyond their own followers and can include things like retweets (X posts) and shares, or any other form of content reposting or sharing depending on the social media channel (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This type of content relies heavily on creating meaningful content for your audience that will encourage them to share your brand and organization with their connections and network (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Controlling the power of shared media allows any organization to exponentially increase their reach and visibility (Luttrell, 2018). In order to capitalize on shared media, brands work to create content that can be shareable, often evoking emotions, entertaining, educating or even inspiring their audience, so that they in turn will want to share it with their friends (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This is most successfully done by brands that utilize visually compelling graphics, storytelling and videos, that encourages users to share content within their own social networks (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). This can also be done by collaborating with influencers and industry leaders, that have been identified as having a strong following within a similar audience type, to increase content sharing and overall reach (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

Owned media refers to the communication channels and content that brands and organizations directly control (Luttrell, 2018). This can include their website, blogs, email newsletters and any social media profiles on various channels. Different from paid media, this media provides complete control over the content produced and the messaging, as it serves as a platform for the brand to tell their story, build relationships with the audience and engage (Colicev, et al., 2018).

Owned media then becomes the foundation for the brand and organization's overall online presence, especially in an age where many organizations exist within several online platforms and social channels (Colicev, et al., 2018). It is critical that any organization creates a well-designed, reliable and informative website, engaging blogs or email newsletters, and consistent social media profiles to enhance and build their trust and reputation with their audience (Colicev, et al., 2018). Attention to this particular form of media in the PESO model allows organizations to build a loyal and dedicated audience, while creating a direct line of communication with their audience to answer questions, gather feedback, research interest and overall nurture long-term relationships (Lutrell, 2018).

These social media pillars are critical to any online strategy for an organization, and they become the foundation to building relationships online while maximizing return. Other research has shown that brands and organizations must focus on a consistent social presence on various social channels with content that continues to be new, with a high frequency to solicit audience engagement (Ling et al., 2004). There is, however, a careful balance that organizations must find between each of the pillars, and often the strategy for larger organizations does not allow for the right balance between each. These pillars will form the basis for the work of this research moving forward, as I look to review the PESO mix that each university is implementing, to better understand the relationship with their audiences.

Conclusion

If, as Benkler (2006) finds, “we communicate more, rather than less, with the core constituents of our organic communities - our family and our friends - and we seem, in some places, also to be communicating more with our neighbors” (p. 260), then the potential in peer-to-peer fundraising and online donations significantly out ways the opportunity of outdated fundraising models discussed earlier.

Wellman et al.'s (2001) work supports this idea as they indicated that “people use the Internet to communicate and coordinate with friends, relatives, and organizations—

near and far—then it is a tool for building and maintaining social capital" (p. 451). Based on these findings, it can be argued online communities offer an opportunity and potential for social capital to be used for social good in fundraising, far beyond the outdated community models and the pace of traditional fundraising.

Within online communities, Wellman (1999) describes that:

> the opportunity for leverage is there, waiting to be seized, ignored, or mishandled. The hegemony of culture, power, and capital that critics from Marx to Fernback and Thompson describe is a potent force to be reckoned with. But if we don't try to make a different in the way tools are used and people are treated we definitely won't make a difference" (p. 391).

The social interactions that occur in these communities, between community members and the brand, can then profoundly influence relationships and the attitudes towards, the brand in both the short and long term (McAlexander, et al., 2002).

These theories provide an opportunity for fundraising that has only begun to be explored in connection with social capital. There is still much to be understood around a strategy for social capital in this space and building community, social credentials and proper reinforcement with donors and potential donors by any not-for-profit. In order to reach the full utopian potential Wellman (1999) and McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig (2002) present, I think it is critical that the fundraising profession leverage the opportunity of social capital more, to create a significant impact for charities and the communities that they serve.

If then, as Huysman and Wulf (2004), explains, social capital provides access to otherwise unattainable resources, it is important to consider this asset in fundraising and relationships. Social capital is an asset that has the power to enable fundraisers to utilize existing networks and cultivate new relationships with donors and potential donors. It becomes critical to understand the fundamental aspects for success in this area. I argue that this comes down to 5 key components that can be considered in this work:

1. Trust: A foundation to social capital, and one that is consistently built over time, either by the organization with the donor and potential donor, or with the individual who's network they are trying to leverage. It is consistently clear in the research that people are more likely to support and fundraise for initiatives from individuals or organizations that they trust the most.
2. Relationships: As discussed with Benkler (2006), Wellman (2001), Rheingold (2000) and others, relationships are the centre of social capital. It will be those individuals and organizations that have developed meaningful connections in a community that will find success when the need arises.
3. Reputation: As demonstrated in the earlier work of Grunig (2006), that a positive reputation for any organization can impact their fundraising success over time. Similar to the findings within *The Excellence Study*, those organizations that continue to communicate and build trust with their audience by delivering on promises and making and communicating impact will be more likely to attract donors.
4. Networks: The networks that Lin (2002), Ang (2011) and Castillo, et al., (2014) describe, are crucial for successful fundraising in the modern era.

This diverse network and extensive potential for outreach expands any potential network of donors, potential donors and sponsors well beyond the traditional means in the earlier stages of fundraising.

5. Reciprocity: In building the community that Wellman (1999) envisioned with online networks, the principle of reciprocity was always a key consideration, that in doing something kind for someone, you are more likely to receive support. This culture of reciprocity is something that any organization must consider in fundraising and communication with their donors and potential donors.

A study by Engagementdb (2009), looked at the top 100 brands from *Business Week* and reviewed their social media presence (including number of channels and engagement). Within this study they found that the companies that had the highest engagement scores and a robust social media strategy on a variety of channels, had a positive correlation with financial performance (Engagementdb, 2009). It is clear that all companies, including not-for-profits, have an opportunity within social media, and communications professionals are continuing to spend more and more time and effort in their campaign planning on building out their relationships and networks on these channels.

These channels provide a variety of options for content allowing for branding in paid displays and boosted posts that are targeted beyond what traditional advertising would allow (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). It creates a space for participating in networking as a brand persona, publishing branded content on a regular basis and developing engagement opportunities for an audience (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). This continued work on creating relationships with an audience through branded content was studied by Sinha, Ahuja, and Medury (2011), and it was concluded that an audience's knowledge of a brand increases in this space, as does an emotional attachment to the brand.

Sheehan and Morrison (2009) identified four main challenges that marketers face in creating content and building communities on social media. They explained that; the first challenge is to effectively use social media overall, second a challenge to grow a creative vision, third the challenge to involve consumers with earned media to share their story and finally, the challenge to reinvent the mass media model (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). With this challenge in mind, as presented by Sheehan and Morrison (2009), this dissertation will review the way in which universities in Canada can effectively use social media as a way to create a vision and to involve their audience, with the fundamental model of PESO as presented by Luttrell (2018).

Literature Review Conclusion:

The literature presented here, outlines the history of fundraising, the field as a profession and the social capital and online communities that many organizations are trying to find success within. For not-for-profits this challenge can be overwhelming, but as demonstrated in the research, a strong strategy and understanding of donors and what matters to them the most if most important. Given this challenge, and the funding model that Canadian institutions are working within, there appears to be a gap within the literature and the field of practice that will need to be addressed in the years ahead. Ultimately, can universities use their various social media channels to create and strengthen an institutional brand and community, building relationships with their audience, and of greater impact, can they leverage those relationships for donation success, and financial gain.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

Core Principles

Instagram and X content will be the focus of the study, but it is acknowledged that there are a many other social channels, however these two provide the greatest set of data for followers and post frequency, as an overall. For this study the researcher applied machine learning to scrape data on each of the select university's official social channels as identified by the institution, reviewing 15 institutions in total. Specifically the data was scraped from their athletics page, alumni pages and central university channel, marking content generation (outputs with the number and frequencies of posts), and user engagements (shares, comments and reactions), over a total of 90 different accounts between Instagram and X. This data is publicly available through the public posts by each institution and is available to use in research (Karatas, 2022).

Scraping the data was applied in this work as described in detail by Schumann (2022) where:

> Scraping data from social media platforms can be an important source of data and in most cases, the data generated by users on social media channels are readily available to organizations for research and marketing purposes. Social media scraping is a process of automatically extracting data from social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Social media scraping bots are available programmed tools to automatically extract data and provide structured data that is ready to be analyzed. (p. 109)

This data was collected for the period of time from August 1, 2021 until July 31, 2022, with the intent being that this mirrors a similar calendar to the student cycle at

Canadian institutions. Each of these university accounts were then reviewed to look at the total number of posts, popularity and engagement amongst their community and followers, as well as sentiment on their posts as well as the comments and responses received.

All of the collected social media content for each institution's channel was then sorted by the researcher based on the definition of the categories of the PESO model as described by Luttrell (2022) and others. This becomes an important tool for sorting social content in this study because, as indicated by Slowikowski, Tootell, Burns and Ellmers (2021), the PESO model "has the potential to help organizations recognize how audiences' access and consume information. It is useful for guiding the development of a communications strategy to reach key stakeholders more effectively" (p. 3).

Finally, this digital communications data was then compared against the fundraising totals and donations shared in each corresponding university's financial report, which is shared publicly every year. The data for each institution's financial report was then considered within the categories or themes of each social media post and compared against any potential patterns in increased donations or content themes and user engagement. For example, if an athletic team for an institution shares winning news on their social media, with large numbers of user engagement, do we see a corresponding increase in athletic donations, further supporting the work of Cialdini et al (1976).

Sampling Procedure

As defined by Hedges (2004), sampling allows us to include a part of a parent population, not as a replica, but as a way of closely resembling a population too large to survey or analyze in its entirety. For this research I used a stratified sample, as described by Stacks (2011), which allowed me to break the total number of Canadian universities into subsets with similar characteristics and homogeneous sets.

For this research, the sorted sample was decided in accordance with the *Maclean's* 2022 university rankings, specifically looking at the top 15 most comprehensive universities (Maclean's, 2022). The *Maclean's* rankings commenced in 1990 and are used because they are very similar in the methods used by other publications like *Consumer Reports*, where items and products are assigned rankings and appointed scores based on various relevant characteristics (Cramer & DeBlock, 2020). Readers for *Consumer Reports* indicate that the rankings and scores are informative, and they base their decisions on the suggestions made within this type of report (Consumer Reports, n.d.).

This is similar to the rankings of postsecondary institutions by *Maclean's*, which have grown in popularity for students and their families, surrounding communities, and alumni, as well as having many implications for the ranked institutions (low or high) each year (Cramer et al., 2016; Cramer & Page, 2007; Page, Cramer & Page, 2009, 2010). *Maclean's* publishes the rankings of Canada's 49 postsecondary institutions to help inform readers about the relative strengths and weaknesses of each public university. The study by *Maclean's* now offers analysis of 20 years of institutional rankings and reputational data, which aligns with the study conducted here.

Maclean's organizes their comprehensive categories by universities that have significant research activity, a diverse group of programs at both the graduate and undergraduate level and professional degrees offered (Maclean's, 2022). Work by

Cramer and DeBlock (2020), suggests that within the comprehensive category, schools that had a higher ranking across the 20 years were less likely to have bigger variations in their reputation scoring compared to those with a lower score. This suggests a greater stability in their reputation and allows for a stability in the sample.

Therefore, in order to account for a more stable reputation over a longer period of time, the following top 15 ranked institutions are used for the sample in this study:

1. UQAM
2. University of Victoria
3. Brock University
4. Wilfrid Laurier University
5. University of Waterloo
6. Carleton University
7. University of Guelph
8. University of New Brunswick
9. Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University as listed on the referenced *MacLean's* report).
10. Concordia University
11. Simon Fraser University
12. University of Windsor
13. York University
14. Memorial University
15. University of Regina

For each institution listed the social media data for the Main or Central communications account, Athletics and the Alumni accounts were collected, on both X and Instagram for a total of 90 different accounts total. This is comparable to many other studies that follow similar models reviewing social media accounts, including Ashley and Tuten (2015), and Engagementdb (2009) as discussed earlier.[1]

The main or central institution account was selected for the study as it represents a cross section of students, alumni and community members, and most likely represents the larger university community as an audience sample, in line with McAlexander, et al., (2012, 2014). These are also likely the accounts that focus on the public relations and marketing strategies as presented earlier the most, in addition to more strategic decisions for many aspects of the business.

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[1] Of note:

After the data was collected for this research, Twitter was acquired by Elon Musk and was renamed to "X". The data and content then does still have reference to the original name of Twitter, because all data and content were collected under the original name, including some of the posts made during the study period, or what was then called "Tweets" and "Retweets". Additionally, after Twitter was acquired and renamed, there were changes made to the algorithm limiting the ability to collect any future data after this work.

The Athletics account was selected as a representative component to the work discussed earlier around student relationship and community, and for many institutions may become the ongoing communications point for the most connected alumni and students, in line with Cialdini, et al., (1976). This is in line with the research discussed earlier around organizational identification and sports marketing as a way to build relationships and community with a diverse population of common interest.

The Office of Advancement or Alumni account is the point of contact for alumni and friends, as well as the fundraising department of the Institution. The structure of these teams can be varied throughout each Institution, but overall, they are focused on fundraising and donor relations similar to the work outlined by Kelly (2001). These accounts were studied because they are important to use as a key indicator for the fundraising work done specifically by each school studied.

Table 1: Social Account Listings

Institution		**Main Account**	**Alumni Account**	**Athletics Account**
UQAM				
	X	https://twitter.com/uqam	https://twitter.com/diplomesUQAM	https://twitter.com/Citadins
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/uqam/	https://www.instagram.com/diplomesUQAM	https://www.instagram.com/citadinsuqam
University of Victoria				
	X	https://twitter.com/uvic	https://twitter.com/UVic_Alumni	https://twitter.com/uvicvikes

	Instagram	https://instagram.com/universityofvictoria	https://instagram.com/uvicalumni/	https://www.instagram.com/uvicvikes/
Brock University				
	X	https://twitter.com/brockuniversity	https://twitter.com/brockualumni	https://twitter.com/brockbadgers
	Instagram	https://instagram.com/brockuniversity	https://www.instagram.com/brockualumni	https://www.instagram.com/brockbadgers/
Wilfrid Laurier University				
	X	https://twitter.com/Laurier	http://www.twitter.com/laurieralumni	https://twitter.com/wluathletics
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/WilfridLaurierUni	http://www.instagram.com/laurieralumni	https://www.instagram.com/wluathletics/
University of Waterloo				
	X	https://twitter.com/uWaterloo	https://www.twitter.com/uwaterlooalumni	https://twitter.com/wloowarriors
	Instagram	https://instagram.com/uofwaterloo/	https://www.instagram.com/uwaterlooalumni	https://www.instagram.com/wloowarriors/
Carleton University				
	X	https://twitter.com/@Carleton_U	https://twitter.com/CarletonAlumni	https://twitter.com/CURavens

	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/carleton_u	https://www.instagram.com/carletonalumni	http://www.instagram.com/ravenscentre
University of Guelph				
	X	https://twitter.com/uofg/	https://twitter.com/UofGalumni	https://twitter.com/guelph_gryphons
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/uofguelph/	https://www.instagram.com/uofgalumni	https://www.instagram.com/gryphonsguelph
University of New Brunswick				
	X	https://twitter.com/UNB	https://twitter.com/unbalumni	https://twitter.com/unbathletics
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/discoverunb	https://www.instagram.com/unbalumni	https://www.instagram.com/unbreds
Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson)				
	X	https://twitter.com/torontomet	https://twitter.com/alumnitmu	https://twitter.com/tmubold
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/torontomet	https://www.instagram.com/alumnitmu/	https://www.instagram.com/tmubold
Concordia University				
	X	https://twitter.com/Concordia	https://twitter.com/ConcordiaAlumni	https://twitter.com/the_stingers
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/concordiauniversity/	https://www.instagram.com/concordia.alumni	https://www.instagram.com/the_stingers

Simon Fraser University				
	X	https://www.twitter.com/sfu	https://www.twitter.com/sfualumni	https://twitter.com/sfu_athletics
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/simonfraseru/	https://www.instagram.com/sfualumni_	https://www.instagram.com/sfu_athletics
University of Windsor				
	X	https://twitter.com/uwindsor	https://twitter.com/UWinAlumni	https://twitter.com/WindsorLancers
	Instagram	https://instagram.com/uwindsor/	https://www.instagram.com/uwinalumni	https://www.instagram.com/windsorlancers
York University				
	X	https://twitter.com/yorkuniversity	https://twitter.com/yorkualumni	https://twitter.com/yorkulions
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/yorkuniversity/	http://instagram.com/yorkualumni/	https://www.instagram.com/yorkulions/
Memorial University				
	X	https://twitter.com/MemorialU	https://twitter.com/MemorialUAlumni	https://twitter.com/MUNathletics
	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/memorialuniversity/	https://www.instagram.com/memorialualumni	https://www.instagram.com/munathletics
University of Regina				
	X	https://twitter.com/UofRegina	https://twitter.com/uralumni	https://twitter.com/reginacougars

	Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/uofreginaofficial/	https://www.instagram.com/uofreginaalumni/	https://www.instagram.com/reginacougars/

Process

Once each social media channel was selected, the social media data was collected by data scraping, through the application program interface or APIs of each social media channel. Initially it was intended to include the data from Facebook, however Facebook is making access to their data increasingly more difficult to access, and a complete data set was not available (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). During the process of this research, it should also be noted that Twitter was acquired by Elon Musk and there was a great deal of concern round changes to the API, so I worked to ensure that a complete data set was collected before this was implemented.

X and Instagram represent an important cross section of age demographics for this study, and critical components to the strategy that institutions use for many aspects of their business. In the PEW research for users in the United States (Auxier & Anderson, 2021), the majority of those aged 18-29 years old said they use Instagram on a regular basis, with 73% using Instagram every day. Similarly, 78% of those surveyed used X in PEW research from 2023 after the name change, as shown further in the data chart below.

For Canada, the numbers remain very similar, where 67% of Canadians indicates using Instagram every day, and of those, over half of those had a university degree (DataReportal, & Meltwater, 2023) This remains consistent with work in the US, where it was noted that users on average had higher income levels and higher education when considered with the entire population (Wojcik & Hughes, 2019). In Canada users spend an average of 2 to 3 hours on their social media a day, and the amount of social media users in Canada is equivalent to 81.9 percent of the entire population (DataReportal & Meltwater, 2023). This demographic data shows an active population overall on each social channel, but also a potentially beneficial number for financial growth at each institution, with those in younger demographics and those with higher incomes being engaged on each of the social channels included in the study.

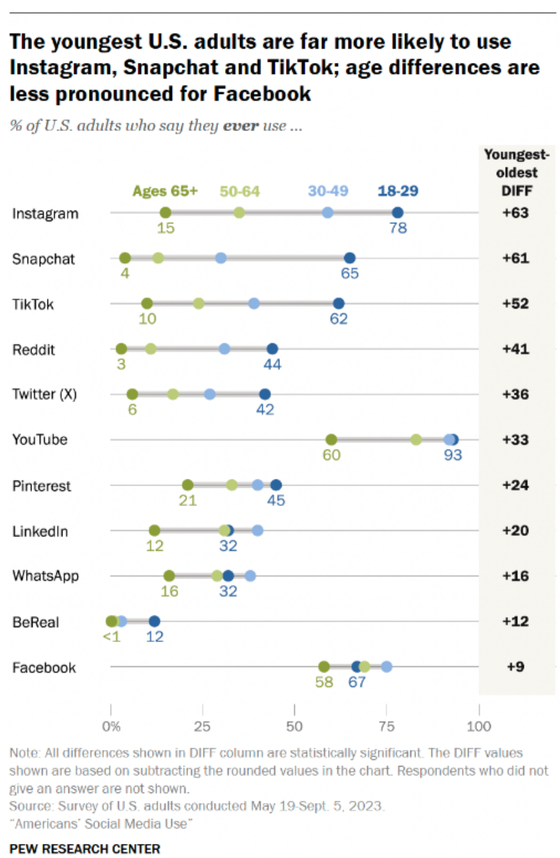

Figure 4: Demographics for Social Media Auxier & Anderson (2021)

Sentiment and Popularity Analysis

In considering the context of this work it not only becomes important to look at the number of posts and topics, but to also consider the sentiment and popularity overall within the content and the comments shared. As defined by Batrinca and Treleaven (2015), sentiment analysis refers “to the application of natural language processing, computational linguistics and text analytics to identify and extract subjective information in source materials (p. 90).

A data analysis was then implemented for opinion mining, specifically sentiment analysis. For the purpose of this research VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary for sEntiment Reasoning), in the Python library was used. VADER is a very effective tool at calculating sentiment analysis and in work by Hutto and Gilbert (2016), they found that VADER (F1 = 0.96) actually even outperforms individual human raters (F1 = 0.84) at correctly classifying the sentiment of an X post into positive, neutral, or negative classes” (p. 216). This tool contains a very extensive dictionary that maps individual words to a sentiment score between -4 and 4. The sentiment of an X post or Instagram post is then calculated by adding the sentiment score of each word and normalizing the score to be a compound value between -1 and 1 (Hutto & Gilbert, 2016).

Before running the sentiment analysis, punctuations and stop words were removed from the original messages. This is consistent with work by Agarwal, Xie, Vovsha, Ram-bow, and Passonneau, (2011); Davidov, et al., (2010); Shastri, Parvathy, Kumar, Wesley, & Balakrishnan, (2010), and others where “grammatical features (conventions of use for punctuation and capitalization) and consideration for degree modifiers like “very” or “extremely” prove to be useful cues for distinguishing differences in sentiment intensity” (Hutto & Gilbert, 2014, p. 224). The compound score for each message was then categorized by as positive if the compound score was greater than 0.5, and negative if the compound score was less than -0.5, and neutral if the compound score was anything in between. This data was then processed to produce a box plot chart so that it was easier to analyze how the data was distributed between institutions and to be able to visually identify the impact of outliers.

The recommendation by many researchers, including Hutto and Gilbert (2016) and Shastra, et al. (2010) is to manually screen a convenience-random sample of the data (randomly select data classified as positive, randomly select data categorized as neutral, and randomly select data categorized as negative) and then perform a manual categorization by reading the original messages. This allows any required refinement of the categorization method.

Throughout this research a visual representation of the data is presented to demonstrate the data in a schematic form using Python, with a “goal of communicating information clearly and effectively through graphical means. Given the magnitude of the data involved, visualization is becoming increasingly important” (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015, p. 90).

The popularity score was calculated as the sum of any engagement divided by the total number of followers for each account at the time that the data was collected. This means that for X posts, popularity was the sum of likes, replies and reposts divided by followers. For Instagram posts popularity was the sum of likes and comments divided by followers. This work is in line with other studies looking at popularity scores on social media, including Garcia, et al. (2017).

All of this data within Python was then verified and tested by a data research assistant to use a test and retest nominal reliability. Python is also a well used tool in the field for reliability and data quality control, as it tests the accuracy of analyses at various steps of the process.

Voyant

There are a variety of tools that are available for social media visualizations and content analysis, however Voyant (https://voyant-tools.org/) is a reliable tool that is free, web-based and designed specifically for reading and informative practice for digital humanities (Prebor, 2023). Voyant has various analytical tools, with different abilities for visualizations and charts, as well as revealing word patterns when reviewing a user's text or collection of texts gathered for any other source (Hendrigan, 2019).

Voyant allows users to organize text into lists, charts, graphs and networks that are interactive and can be manipulated and maneuvered to explore text from various angles (Calado, 2018). Any data shared can then be displayed in different ways, including, the TermsBerry tool, which is a way to explore higher frequency terms and words (Calado, 2018). Additionally, bubble lines allow an opportunity to analyze the text by finding the frequency of the most used words or phrases. Voyant has five panels available for analysis, Cirrus, Reader, Trends, Summary, and Context.

As detailed by Schumann (2022):

> The Cirrus tool is a word cloud that visualizes the frequency of words in a corpus or document and positions the words such that the terms that occur the most frequently are positioned centrally and are sized the largest. The algorithm goes through the list and draws words as close as possible to the center of the visualization. Small words are placed within spaces left by larger words that do not fit together snugly and the color of words and their absolute position are not significant (p. 108).

For the purpose of this research, the Cirrus tool by Voyant will be used to review the frequency and themes within the social media posts, to help to identify any potential trends within content types.

Paid Content

Through the Meta Ad Library, which covers Instagram, Facebook, Messenger and Audience Network, I was able to pull a list of paid advertisements that each institution, and corresponding channels ran during the time period of this study. Each campaign, total spend, and total impressions was then recorded, and themes categorized. The Meta Library is a publicly available tool that is available for anyone to view and search ads (Meta, n.d.). It was created by Meta to maintain advertising transparency by showing all active and inactive ads for 7 years (Meta, n.d.). The Meta ad library lists each advertiser's total amount spent, total number of ads they have in the library, estimated total amounts spent by each advertiser for their campaign, and their total number of ads (Meta, n.d.).

Impressions and Engagement

All social media channels calculate and show a score or engagement, and this management derives from Goffman (1959), in *The Presentation of Self in Every Day Life.* Within this text Goffman (1959) explains that when an individual is in front of others, they adjust their behaviour or what they are trying to convey for their preferred impression to any audience. Further studies demonstrate that this is easier to manage in an online environment than in person (Ellison, et al., 2006, Fullwood, 2019, Tuominen, et al., 2022). For this reason, many studies now use social media impressions as a key indicator of true impressions (Gadgil, et al., 2021).

As defined by Luttrell (2019), a better term would be potential impressions, representing "the gross number of opportunities for items to be seen, regardless of frequency of display, method of accessing the item, or audience duplication" (p. 162). There are certainly arguments to indicate the challenge with using impressions as an indicator of social media and brand success as further discussed by Luttrell (2019), but as noted by Graves et, al., (2010), impressions is still a more targeted calculation compared to any print calculation predecessor, as "the most basic role of media measurement is to achieve a consensus on the number of people reading, watching, or listening to a particular news outlet — and to the ads it carries", and social media impressions continues to serve this.

Within the social media channels, including X, Facebook and Instagram, impressions are calculated by the number of times an ad appears on a screen for the first time (Meta, n.d.). This common metric is used in the online marketing industry and in an online space can be directed to a targeted audience that you have selected and is accredited by the Media Rating Council. The Media Rating Council is a not-for-profit regulatory body that was established at the request of the US Congress in 1963 to audit and accredit media measurement products and data for digital, print, television, radio and cross media products (Media Rating Council, n.d.).

For the purpose of this research, in consideration with the discussions and research shared above;

Paid: refers to the entirety of the work found within the Facebook Ad Library during the study period.

Earned: refers to the user-generated content and the indications of mentions and reach beyond the brand's own following, including quoted content, comments and captions, etc.

Shared: refers to the brand's content, with a consideration for the emotional response and reach, this will be considered with sentiment analysis and scoring sentiment applied in this study.

Owned: refers entirely to the coverage of the brand's content, looking at the posts, themes and topics shared, as well as the engagement achieved within those posts by looking at likes, comments and views.

Beyond the data analysis discussed above, a content analysis was done to review themes with the content areas and outliers. This is in line with the work of Altheide (1996), who defined content analysis as a tool where researchers can analyze a topic, including both context and process, to understand the communications. This additional way to analyze the posts allows for a human contribution to content analysis, which as Neuendorf (2002) explains, is critical to a more comprehensive understanding of an issue. Thematic groupings were established and this approach to content analysis allowed for a review of patterns and themes to better understand the nuances to the social media content reviewed (Braun & Clark, 2006). These groups related to: Winning teams (including Pride), Nostalgia and Memorial, Institutional Decision-Making, Events and Ambassadors.

Upon completion of this data scraping and social media collection between August 1, 2021 and July 31, 2022, there were 34,974 X posts and 10,651 Instagram posts across the 15 institutions and their three dedicated social media accounts for their official brand.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Overall

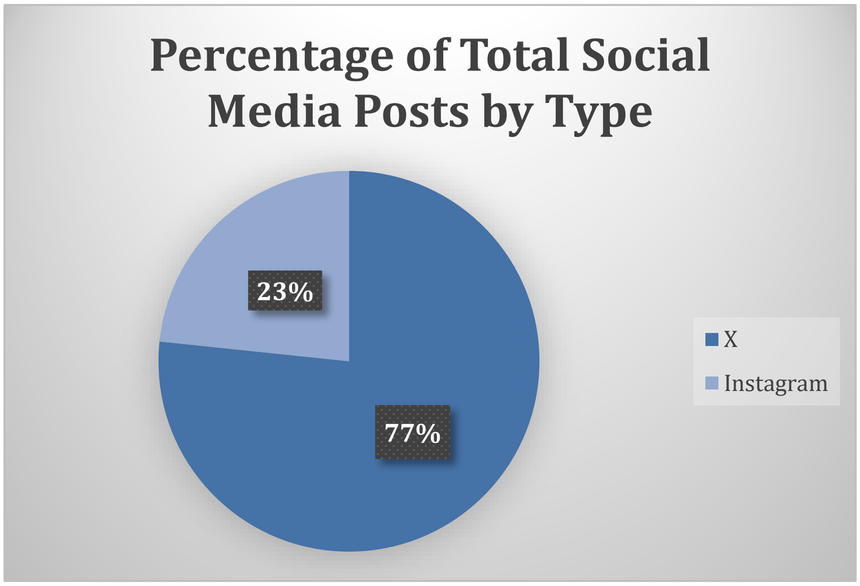

Figure 5: Percentage of Messages by Type

Over the period of August 1, 2021, and July 31, 2022, there were 34,974 X posts and 10,651 Instagram posts collected for the sample of institutional branded content (excluding paid content). This means that a total of 45,625 posts were analyzed, with the overall share of this content significantly favouring X, with just over 77% of content being on X, compared to Instagram. This is likely a result of the platform expectations, as X is a platform where consistent posts on a regular basis, including multiples in the same day, is expected over Instagram posts, where often the expectation is less frequent and more substantial posts overall. Instagram alternatively has stories as their feature for daily posts, however this data was not included in the research because it expires and is no longer available after 24 hours.

For example, the athletics accounts on average shared multiple game day updates, including play by play as events were happening, which overall skewed the total number of posts for those accounts. Instagram posts do however require more visual elements to their posts compared to X in a general sense, meaning many X posts can go without photos, but it is a requirement on Instagram, so the posts that were made on that channel were a more detailed, length and seemed to have slightly larger interest overall, which is later discussed in these findings.

In contrast, the alumni accounts for both Instagram and X appear to be an underserved social media channel overall consistently. Within this entire chapter in comparison to the central university accounts or athletics accounts, the alumni accounts for all universities overall are always the lowest in quantity of content, as shown further in the graphic to the right. This excludes the outlier of Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU, formerly Ryerson), which will be discussed later in this research as an outlier, having gone through a name change during this study. This indicates that this one specific instance of a need to communicate to alumni for a significant mark in the University's history, is not indicative of a pattern for alumni communication moving forward in the sector.

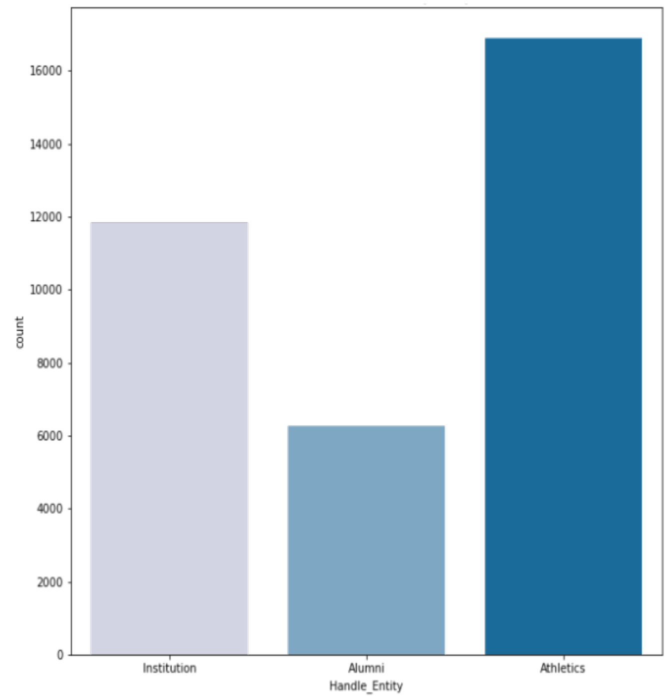

Figure 6: Total Number of Posts by Entity

The table below shows the breakdown of social media posts (both Instagram and X), by institution channel:

Table 2: List of Accounts and Total Posts

Institution	**Main Account**	**Alumni Account**	**Athletics Account**
UQAM			
Total Post Count	179	182	58
University of Victoria			
Total Post Count	502	362	331
Brock University			
Total Post Count	1028	217	791
Wilfrid Laurier University			
Total Post Count	1388	317	1923
University of Waterloo			
Total Post Count	724	839	2113
Carleton University			
Total Post Count	309	334	1094
University of Guelph			
Total Post Count	842	374	3124
University of New Brunswick			
Total Post Count	359	884	4270
Toronto Metropolitan University			

Total Post Count	902	1929	1252
Concordia University			
Total Post Count	641	589	1094
Simon Fraser University			
Total Post Count	1416	1124	1131
University of Windsor			
Total Post Count	1912	247	1756
York University			
Total Post Count	901	320	1443
Memorial University			
Total Post Count	1367	484	966
University of Regina			
Total Post Count	716	115	481

Overall Earned and Shared

It is interesting to note that there is an inverse relationship between the number of X posts per month and the average popularity per post, as shown below. This becomes important because often the social strategy, and intent in building community would indicate that consistent posting is critical for success, as noted earlier by Ling, et al. (2005).

In descriptive data, a box plot allows us a visual opportunity to explain a data analysis. These plots show the distribution of various numerical data and skew, by displaying the data into quartiles (minimum score, first or lower quartile, median, third or upper quartile and finally, maximum score). A vertical line is then drawn through the box at the median, and the lines on the outside of the box, often referred to as whiskers, from the minimum to the lower quartile, or the start of the box, to the maximum. As Statistics Canada (2021) explains, this graph can be useful in "indicating whether a distribution is skewed and whether there are potential unusual observations (outliers) in the data set. A box plot is ideal for comparing distributions because the centre, spread and overall range are immediately apparent". Each of the dots located to the right and left of the line indicate outliers, meaning points that are 1.5 times the interquartile range above or below the 3rd and 1st quartiles, showing us that something interesting may have happened within the data at that point, and for the purpose of this research, will be referred to as the outliers.

As mentioned in the explanation of this research earlier, the compound score for each message on X and Instagram was categorized as positive if the score is greater than 0.5 and negative if it is less than –0.5, and neutral if it is anything in between. Based on that analysis, overall, as shown in the box plot chart below, it is clear that no institution is a clear leader in the sentiment score overall, with Wilfrid Laurier, University of Regina, Simon Fraser University and the University of Waterloo receiving the highest score totals, but still not significant enough of a score to suggest a strength in content.

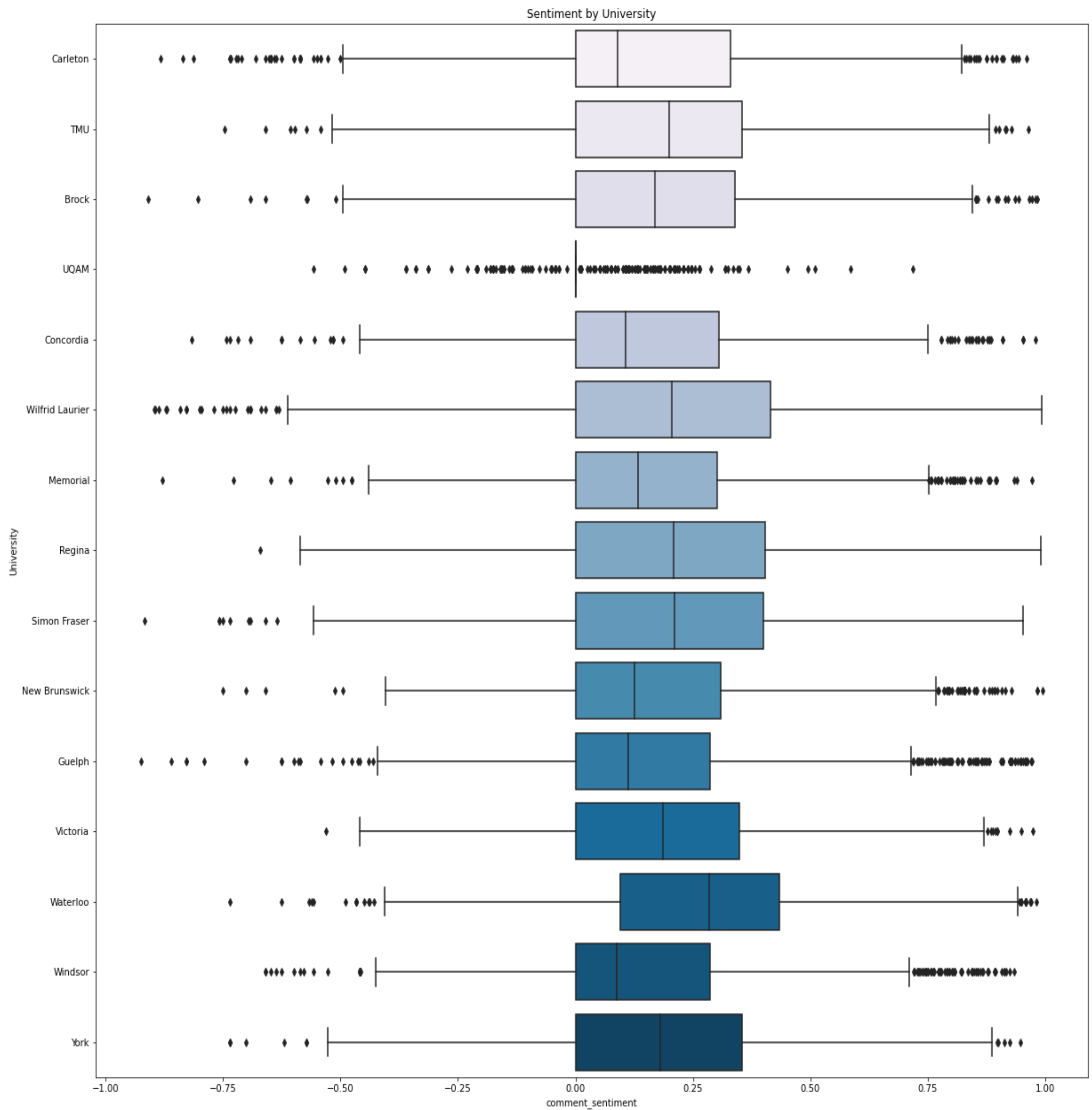

Figure 7: Sentiment Score by Overall University

This overall low sentiment score for all institutions across the research group becomes an issue because it demonstrates that the shared content, as explained earlier, should be content that evokes emotion, entertains, educates or inspires, so that followers share that content with their own network, as discussed by Ashley and Tuten (2015), however that appears to not be the case for the institutions studied. By not successfully creating emotional and strong content, as the graph above suggests, brands are missing an opportunity to connect with not only their audience of students and alumni, but also to have those dedicated followers of their account, share the brand with their own networks, therefore increasing and expanding their reach as an organization. It is clear than that brands are clearly creating a great deal of content as mentioned at the start of this research, but the impact of that content is not as strong as it should be, which will be reviewed further throughout this work.

Overall Owned

Using the definition of owned discussed earlier, this type of content is exclusive to just what a brand posts from their own accounts, and therefore, how successful that content is for the brand within the following that they already have. The mark of success in this content then becomes the likes, engagement, comments and views that each piece of content may receive overall, allowing them to enhance and build trust and reputation with their audience (Colicev, et al., 2018).

When considering the patterns of content overall it can be helpful to look at institutions by their overall X posts and their Instagram posts. The chart below shows the total number of X posts by each University, over the period of the study. Within this data it is clear the institutions that put a greater effort on X posts in terms of volume of content over the year.

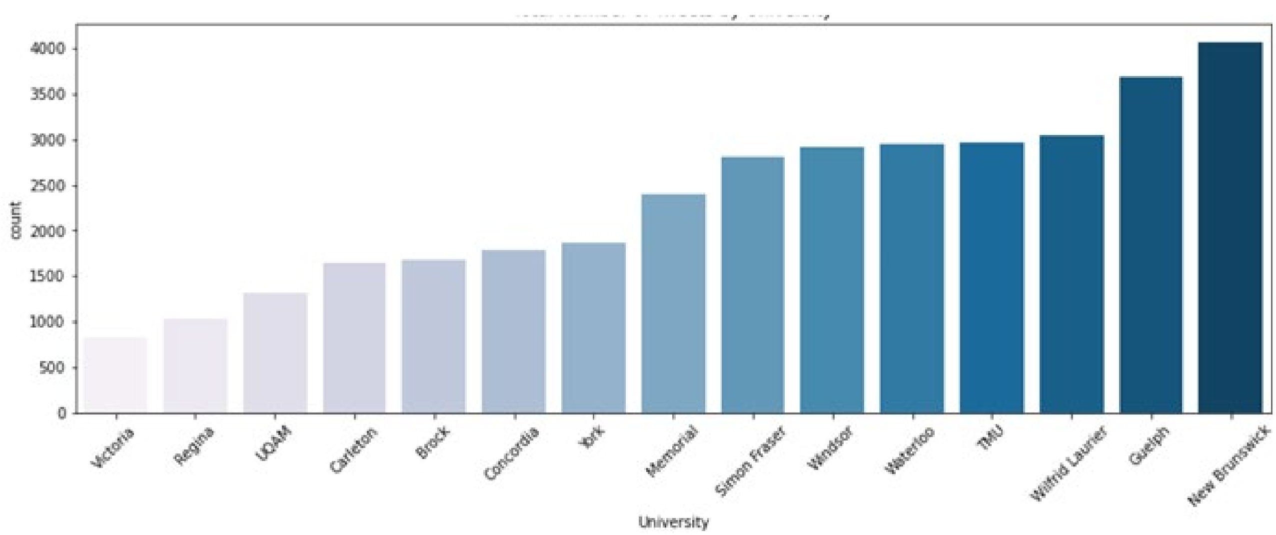

Figure 8: Total Number of X posts by University, August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022

When extracting the Instagram posts specifically, as shown below, for this analysis and comparing it against the total number of X posts, it is clear that certain institutions put a greater importance on Instagram strategy, versus keeping consistency in the volume of content overall. The University of Guelph for example, has a great deal of posts on X, and are the second highest out of the institutions studied for the number of posts over the year on that channel. However, when their Instagram data is analyzed on its own, they drop to being 9th out of the institutions studied. The University of New Brunswick in contrast, have clearly put an equal amount of strategy into their total posts for each channel, and appear to be very active in their owned content on both Instagram and X, in particular with their athletics content, which will be reviewed later.

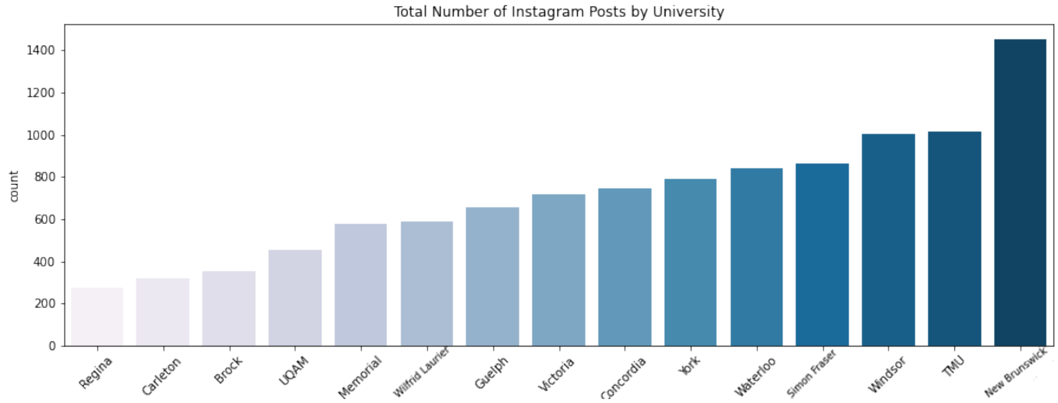

Figure 9: Total Number of Instagram Posts by University August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022

On the other side of this consideration, University of Regina, Carleton, UQUAM and Brock University have all consistently posted less on their social media accounts, both for X and Instagram than other institutions. This is important to note, as later we will discuss the outlier examples of Brock University and Carleton, who may, as shown above have low consistency in their posts, but do have stronger communities in particular types of content that they share on both X and Instagram. The University of Victoria in this example also appears to be the only institution that has put a greater consideration on Instagram over X, as it was the lowest for posts on X during the study, but instead has become the median of the research segment for their Instagram count.

It is noted that throughout each institution it was observed that the number of posts did not have a relationship with engagement. Meaning that, the volume of posts both in consistency and frequency, although often a focus for a social media manager communications team, did not actually have a relationship with overall engagement as one might think. As an example, as shown in the diagram below, York University has a lower number of posts in terms of frequency compared to other institutions studied. but they had a higher rate of success on their popularity (calculated as the sum of any engagement divided by the total number of followers for each account at the time that the data was collected) and engagement overall in comparison to those same institutions.

Using the box plot chart below, the left side represents the first quartile, or the 25th percentile, and the line in the middle represents the median, or the 50th percentile, and the right side represents the 75th percentile of data, we can see how institutions ranked for popularity overall. The one dot located on the right of the box plot for the University of Guelph is identified as an outlier and is discussed later in this research. The top three institutions overall for popularity were Carleton, Regina and Victoria (calculated as the sum of any engagement divided by the total number of followers for each account at the time that the data was collected). It is important to note that because the number of followers for the accounts are used in the calculation for popularity, it is possible that the schools that have smaller communities overall, like Carleton, Regina and Victoria, would be more likely to have an engaged following.

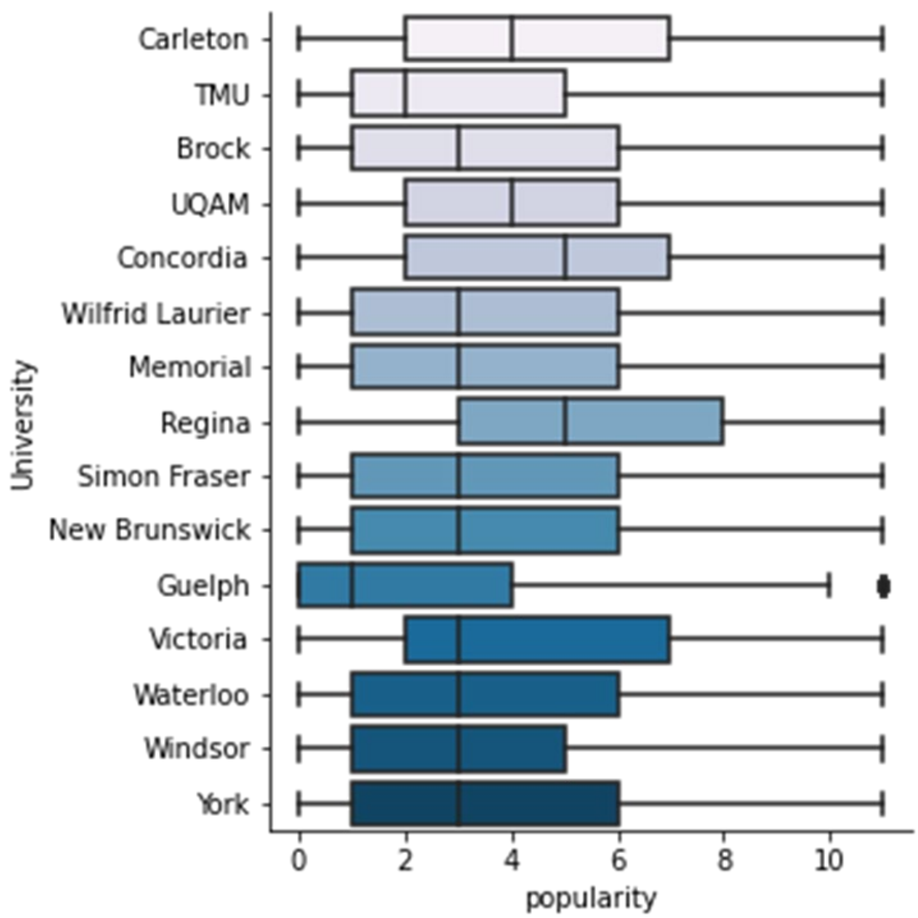

Figure 10: Overall Popularity Score by University

It is possible then that those with smaller communities at their institutions, both in students and alumni, are more likely than to have engaged audiences. For example, University of Regina has 88,000 alumni and just over 16,000 students currently (University of Regina, 2023), and University of Victoria has just over 100,000 alumni and 22,000 students (University of Victoria, n.d.). Compared to those with lower popularity scores like the University of Waterloo with 244,000 alumni and 38,000 students (University of Waterloo, 2023), Simon Fraser University with over 195,000 alumni and over 37,000 students (Simon Fraser University, 2023), and finally Toronto Metropolitan University with well over 240,000 alumni and 38,000 students attending (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2023).

Not only are those institutions large in size, but they are also geographically located in cities, which may also create a greater likelihood for their student population to feel more disconnected to the institution, compared to those who are in residence, study and potentially work on their campus in more isolated spaces, like the University of Victoria and the University of Regina. This indicates that those with the smaller community overall, have a greater likelihood of building relationship and trust with their students and alumni, and that in turn, those relationships demonstrate a stronger engagement on social media, similar to the work presented earlier by Benkler (2006), Wellman (2001), Rheingold (2000) and others.

Interestingly, this leaves Carleton as a potential outlier to the data analysis presented here, with their alumni population being closer in size to the larger institutions like the University of Waterloo and TMU, with 177,000 alumni and just over 31,000 students currently (Carleton University, 2023), and being located within a city centre. This suggests the impact of a potential relationship in their community that other larger institutions have not yet achieved, as their popularity is still quite strong despite a larger alumni and student group. This will be further discussed in the later sub-chapters around athletics and alumni engagement overall.

Also of note, overall, there seems to be a negative relationship with a higher rate of X posts per month with popularity overall, suggesting that schools that post too much content over a smaller period, see a negative impact to their popularity score. For example, the University of Guelph and the University of New Brunswick had the highest volume of X posts overall when looking at the data, but their popularity scores were among the lowest. This suggest that posting the most frequently is not in fact an indicator of success, but rather the quality of the content seems to matter more to the audience than just the quantity of the posts.

When looking at their specific X posts using a thematic content analysis, a great deal of Guelph's content is related to their work on athletics events and games, specifically giving play by play for sporting events on X as suggested earlier. This may indicate that the overall relationship with their understanding of where their audience may be interested in events may not accurately reflect the interests of their followers. It would be fair to say for example that those following the Gryphon's athletics accounts (The University of Guelph athletics account), are interested in sports, but getting those updates does not appear to fulfill their need to community. Further review of the University of Guelph athletics accounts specifically, occurs in later chapters.

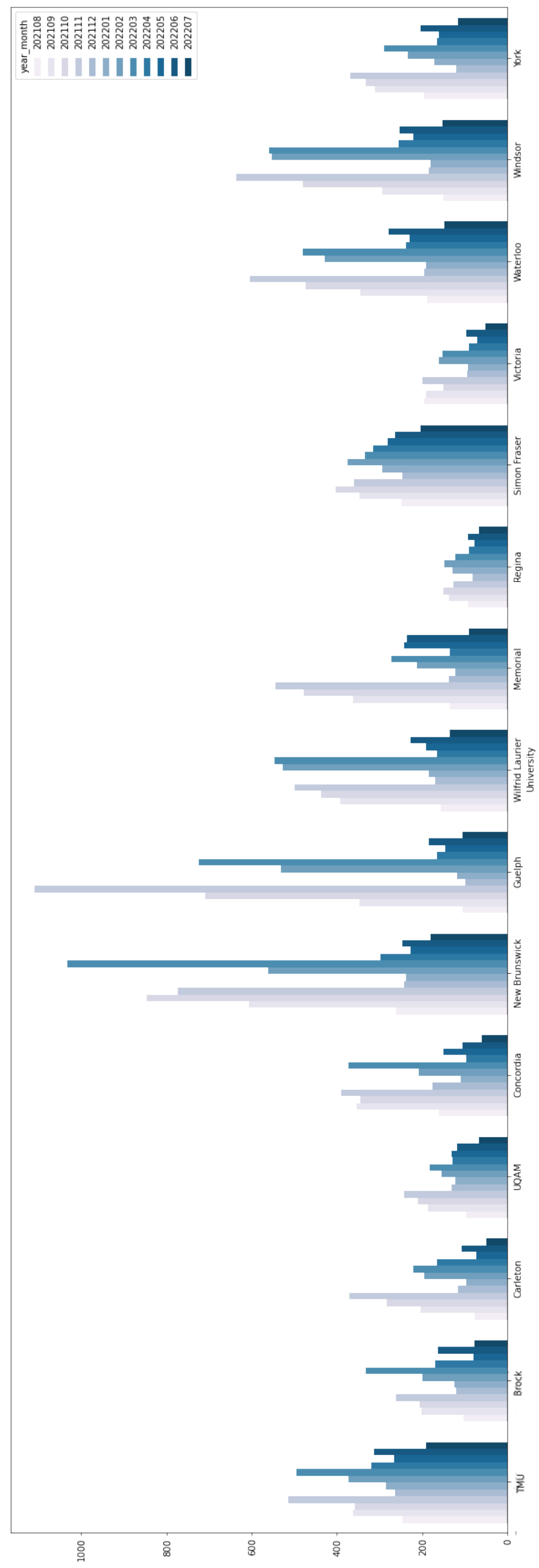

Figure 11: Total Number of Social Posts by Month

The chart above shows the monthly number of social posts total, both X posts and Instagram by each university. By reviewing the timing of content above, we see that the number of monthly posts overall mirror the academic year, showing an increasing trend throughout the terms and a decline during the summer and winter breaks. Although the University of New Brunswick has the most posts overall, Guelph University had the largest number of posts in a month for November 2021.

This suggests that universities overall are not working on building their brand strategy consistently throughout the year, and instead are limited to working within the academic year for the majority of their social strategy. While this makes sense for more student-based accounts and recruitment cycles, it does indicate that the other audiences, like alumni and the broad community are missing the continuous touchpoints, in contrast to the strategy and best practices elements discussed earlier in the literature review.

Looking at this type of content in greater detail, it can be helpful to understand how much strategy each institution places on the content for X and Instagram individually. The chart below shows the total number of posts by institution for Instagram and X, with the column to the left representing Instagram and the one to the right representing X, showing a higher number of X posts being posted overall. This could suggest that there is a greater strategy put on this channel, but it is also possible that it is just representative of the expectations of X versus Instagram, because, as shared earlier, X does require more frequent posts.

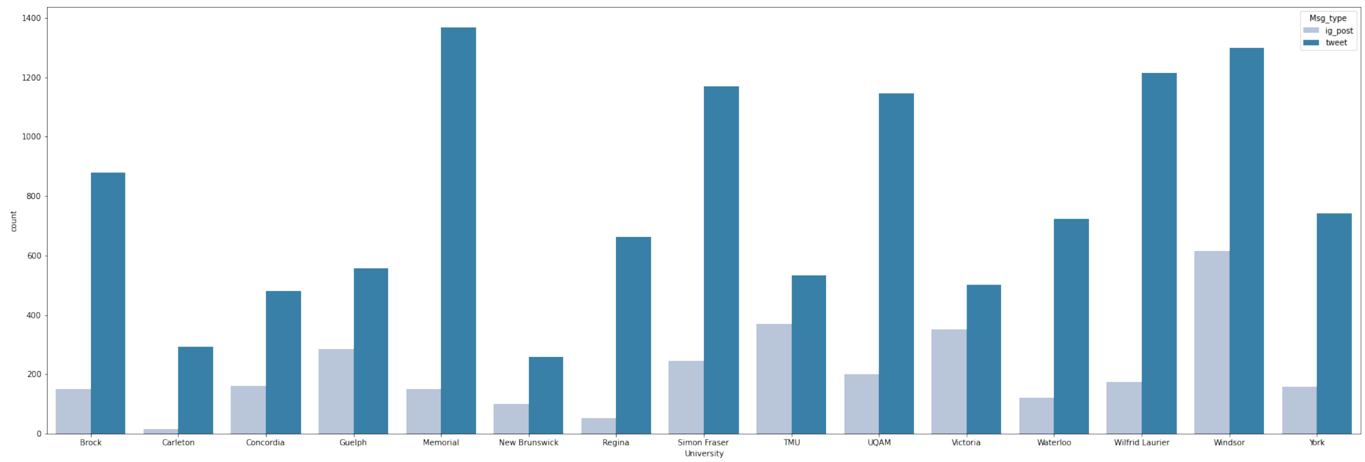

Figure 12: Total Posts by Institution for Instagram and X

Once again, within the data set above we can see that the University of Regina and the University of New Brunswick have lower posts overall on both channels, but that there are institutions that have put a greater amount of work on one platform over the other. Memorial for example has one of the lower number of posts for Instagram but ranks highest in their X posts overall. This is further reviewed later in this work with examples of their athletics posts in the content analysis. Overall, both in Instagram and X, this chart shows that Carleton University consistently ranks the lowest frequency for posts on either platform.

The chart below shows, the total number of overall posts by each institution's main pages as studied (athletics, central and alumni), so that we are able to see a comparison in the way that each account is used within the institutional strategy. Looking at this data, it is clear that athletics generally represents the most active account for each institution, with the main accounts following behind in second, in some cases by a significant amount The majority of institutions have their alumni channels as the least active account out of the three studied, as shown in the figure below.

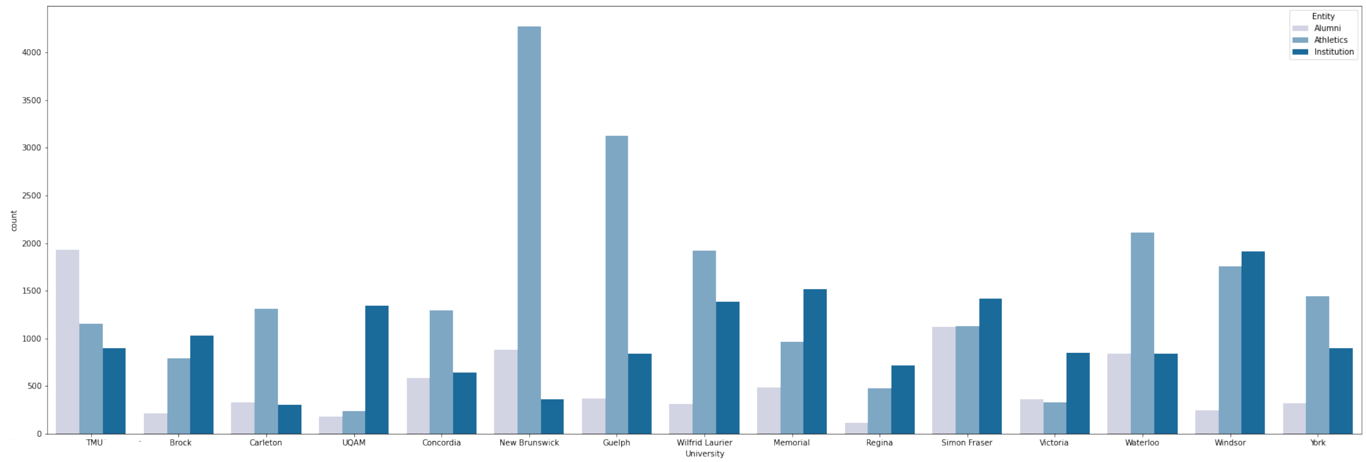

Figure 13: Total Number of Posts by Account Type from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022

Within this chart it is clearer that institutions that were previously discussed in this research for an overall low amount of posts, like the University of New Brunswick, actually have a higher overall score for a particular channel, in this case athletics, allowing us to see that there is a potential for a stronger component to their brand and community relationship in one particular area of the institution. TMU is the only institution that appears to have a higher score in their alumni category than any other university in the study, but this can include a stronger alumni communications campaign around the renaming of the institution within the study period, which will be unpacked later. All other alumni scores were relatively low in comparison to the institutional account or athletics, and Brock, UQAM, Memorial, Regina, Simon Fraser and Windsor were the only institutions that had their main account with the most number of posts overall.

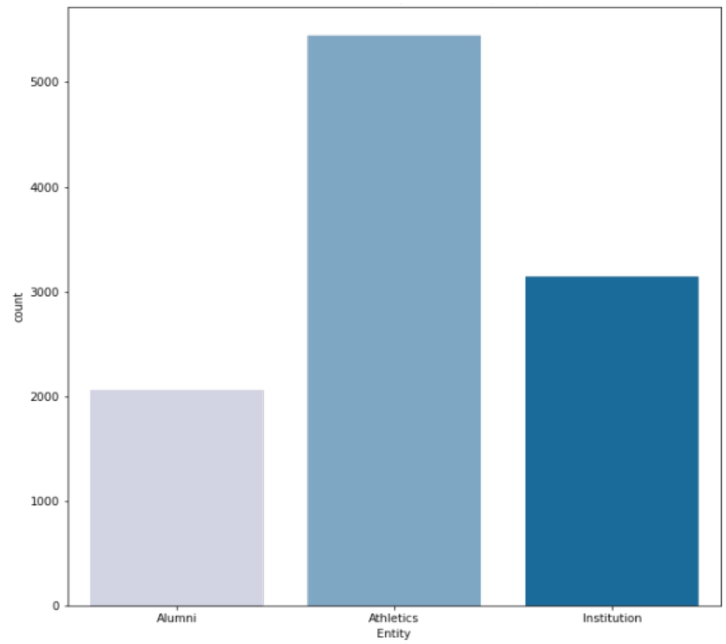

Figure 14: Total Number of Instagram Posts by Entity

Considering the high number of posts overall by each institution on each of their three channels researched here, it becomes important to take a closer look at each specific channel by type, to see which each institution is utilizing the most. The figures below show the total number of X posts and Instagram posts by entity, meaning the central account, alumni and final athletics. This data further supports that Athletics overall seems to be the most active account by institutions, with a greater share of content related to winning teams and community building posts. Throughout the next set of sub-chapters I will attempt a critique and review of these specific channels by each institution to gain a greater understanding of the impact this work is having on their communication and community building success for fundraising.

In future it would be interesting to consider this type of research in contrast to what might be found at an American institution in terms of balance of content between athletics, alumni and central communications. As noted earlier, Canadian universities do not put the same amount of consideration and funding into their athletics departments as American universities do, but this strength of content theme for the universities studied may show that there should be a greater consideration moving forward to discuss winning teams and sports, in line with the work of Cialdini, et al. (1976), and reviewed in more detail later in this dissertation.

Additionally, I would suggest that an area of future research in this larger study would be reviewing the consideration for more detailed geographic impact for the campuses and their location in relation to the community feeling and closeness described in the literature review. In a general sense this seems to suggest that the smaller institutions have a greater likelihood to build those relationships and have a higher engagement and popularity within their communities, but this needs to be further explored in detail. This aligns with the work earlier on student experience and the importance of that relationship for long term value for the institution.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS - ATHLETICS

Paid

Of the 15 schools reviewed, there were no athletics accounts listed as running paid advertisements on Facebook or Instagram during the timeframe set out in the study. In fact, of all schools reviewed, only one had an ad scheduled in the three years prior to the start of the study, dating back to 2020, as shown to the right. This ad, run by the University of Regina Cougars ran on Instagram from May 11 to May 14, 2020, with a total spend of less than $100, gaining a total of 6,000 to 7,000 impressions during the period of the ad running.

Figure 15: University of Regina Athletics Advertisement

Of note, the ad was about a student-athlete who completed a fundraising challenge selling masks, with proceeds going to other local charities in Regina (University of Regina, 2020). There was no mention of fundraising for the institution, which is important note for the purpose of this research. It also has no real mention of athletics, which was the account paying for the advertisement. but having been posted during May of 2020, it would have appeared during the peak of the COVID pandemic when communities were most active around masking and campaigning for community initiatives to stay safe from COVID. This more minimal spend on a social media campaign was likely more about community building then it was for the brand of the University, but certainly indicated a commitment from the institution for community care.

Earned

By applying the qualifiers of earned content presented by Luttrell (2002), quoted content counts were reviewed to see measurements for earned success in social content, as a marker for engagement in community with user-generated content. Beyond the quoted content, it is fair to consider that I was not able to capture the posts by influencers and community members that would have been shared without links to the original content. However, in alignment with Gonçalves, et al., (2019), and Ashley and Tuten (2015), user generated content encompasses the sharing of brand content, but also comments, captions, pictures, and contest entries.

Within this context, using the thematic content analysis for the athletics accounts, there were some consistencies in the types of posts that received the highest numbers of shares and mentions from brand loyalists. Overall, the posts that were related to pride, and winning teams had the highest total amount of earned content. For some examples of this, the top three pieces of content on X, when removing the outliers that I will discuss later, were related to winning teams, and includes posts by the Carleton Ravens (@CURavens), who shared successes by athletes, for example:

Figure 16: Carleton University Ravens Success

This piece of content alone had a 708 score on popularity, with 81 X reposts and 71 quoted pieces of content, meaning others within their network shared that piece of brand content to their own social networks and following with commentary. This continued success by the Carleton Ravens is demonstrated in the next highest score with 1099 in popularity for their post on winning a National Basketball Championship, with 164 X reposts and 43 quoted X posts.

Similarly, the third highest rated content by popularity after the Ravens wins and successes, was by Concordia University's (@The_Stingers), for a National Championship win for their women's hockey team, with a total popularity score of 986 as shown below:

Figure 17: Concordia Stingers Winning Team

These types of winning posts, especially for the institutions that had teams winning National Championships had the highest success ratings overall as an average, and this aligns with the work by Cialdini, et al., (1976) and others, who continue to see success with followers and fans sharing pride in a team’s success and wins, increasing their brand profile and reach overall.

In consideration of the outliers that are found within earned content examples, the University of Waterloo Warriors (@WlooWarriors) had a post on a student participating in the Olympics, which rated at a 2757 popularity score, their highest score by far in their athletics account:

Figure 18: University of Waterloo Student at the Olympics

These posts become pride points and the most likely to be shared and amplified by those with their own social capital to better amplify the awareness of the school and their athletics successes overall, as indicated by their popularity score, shares and reposts. Similarly, beyond announcing winning teams and successes, the second most popular content types by category were related to announcing a new coach or assistant coach, for football, but other sports saw similar successes. These pieces of content were most likely to be amplified and shared within the community, indicating a strong affinity to a particular team or sport within the following.

Shared

With shared content being categorized by the organic social reach and emotions, compared to paid content, athletics seems to be the most successful of the three account types studied for shared success as an aggregate. When looking at the overall popularity of content (shown below in the multi box plot below) in relationship to the number of messages, as represented to the left of the graph, most of the content posted by the athletics accounts does not see some of the successes mentioned in the earned content types, but there is a number of posts rated at a higher popularity point on average, compared to a relatively smaller number of messages overall. This is also an area that has the highest number of outliers, as indicated by the dots located to the right of the graph, which will be reviewed in detail later.

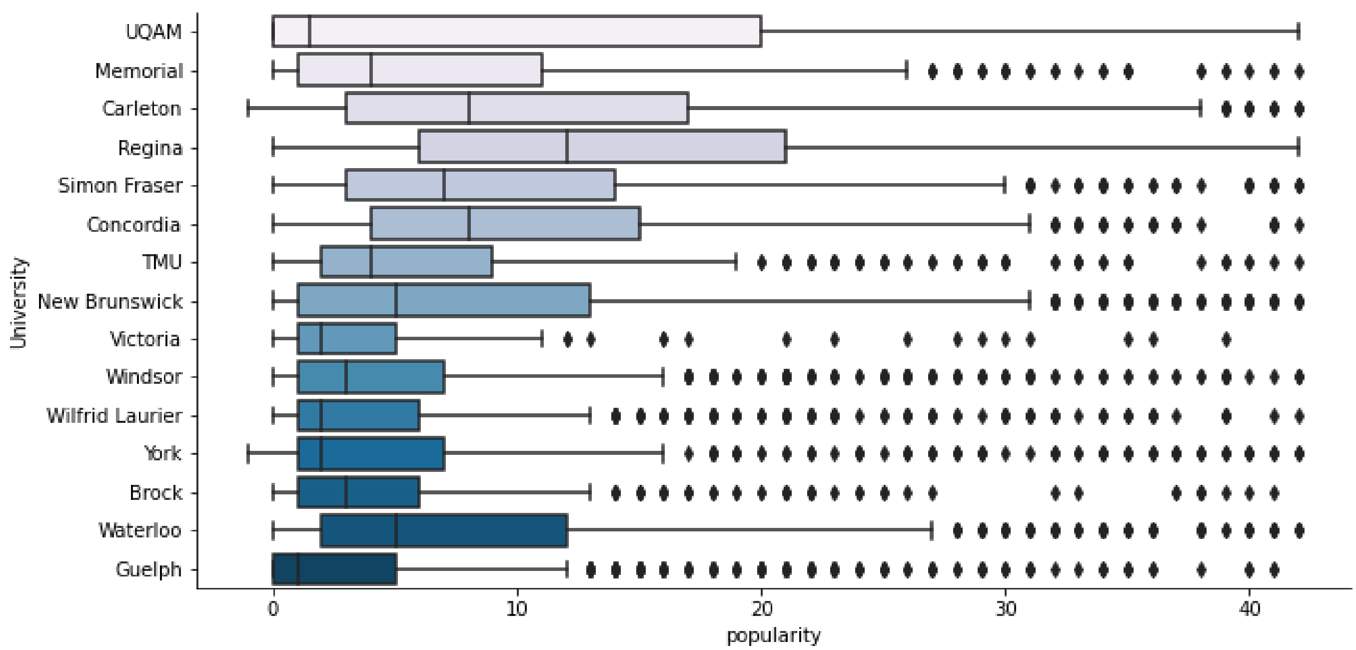

Figure 19: Overall Popularity - Athletics

The chart above shows that active followers of the athletics accounts are more likely to share the content posted from the athletics channels than any other channels from their affiliated institution. This shows that they feel the most need and desire to express their loyalty with this type of brand relationship, indicated by sharing the content with their own followers and social community, in support of the work by Luttrell (2018) and Luo, (2002). This creates the greatest potential than for community success and brand building for an institution allowing them to build a strong social brand and relationship with a broader audience, indicating that in future this should be something considered as a strategic focus for all institutions.

When looking at this same content type for each university, there are some clear indicators that the Brock University, University of Victoria and Wilfrid Laurier University have some of the higher shares of popularity overall, as shown in the figure above. It should be noted that during this same period, the University of Guelph experienced a series of successful seasons with their sports team, including a Rugby and Soccer championship for their men's teams, which support the outliers indicated by the dots to the right. Similarly, Brock University had teams competing in Provincial and National Championships for hockey, wrestling, volleyball and lacrosse, so they have an audience interested in winning overall.

The chart above appears to suggest an overall low popularity score for the University of Guelph in their athletics account, however it does also show a greater number of outliers to their content overall. It does suggest that they have many posts that have high engagement and greater likelihood of social media success, however they have so many posts (they were the second highest for athletics posts of the institutions studied as shown earlier), that the average score remains quite low. This further supports the finding earlier that the higher number of posts does not mean a greater likelihood for success, and that good strategy can mean fewer but more meaningful pieces of content to engage and audience.

Overall, the University of Guelph also has a culture of priority for athletics and have put a great deal of their institutional investments into the work that they do for their student and alumni community around athletics. For example, they have a strong communications campaign around supporting the Gryphon's and have successfully raised millions of dollars every year for their athletics programs, including various new facilities and equipment. Their athletics website even has a section dedicated to the sponsorship and naming opportunities available to donors, as well as photos and information on those that have donated to have an area named after them (Guelph Gryphons, n.d.). They have also extensively developed their donor thank you opportunities and have shared the list of donors that have reached greater giving numbers overall, including Stu Lang, who has to date donated over $10 million to the athletics department alone (Guelph Gryphons, n.d.). Clearly this all shows a strong relationship on campus to the success of athletics and the importance the institution is putting on athletics overall in their culture on campus and as alumni.

Using the scatter plot below, allows a visual representation for identifying relationship between two sets of data, in this case the popularity in relation to the text count or length. Meaning, the closer the data points are to being in a straight line, the higher the correlation, in other words, the stronger the relationship. The scatter plot below therefore, shows this research in line with the earlier findings suggesting that the number of posts is not related to the success, similar is true in athletics. This is helpful as a finding for institutions, because it suggests that there is not a great deal of work that needs to go in to posting frequently over a longer period of time, but rather just posting good quality content, that your audience is interested in, less often, can still have success and be meaningful for your audience.

Those social posts with higher popularity scores overall were not lengthy and detailed posts, but rather quick updates of successes by student-athletes and teams. The scatter plot chart shown below, indicates the popularity score of content in relation to the length of the post. This indicates that it is not a requirement to have a detailed and elaborate post to have success, and that with this audience, quick updates with winning success are favoured. This is furthered by the examples provided earlier in this chapter of winning teams, where the posts contained fewer texts, but were rated as the highest posts for popularity overall.

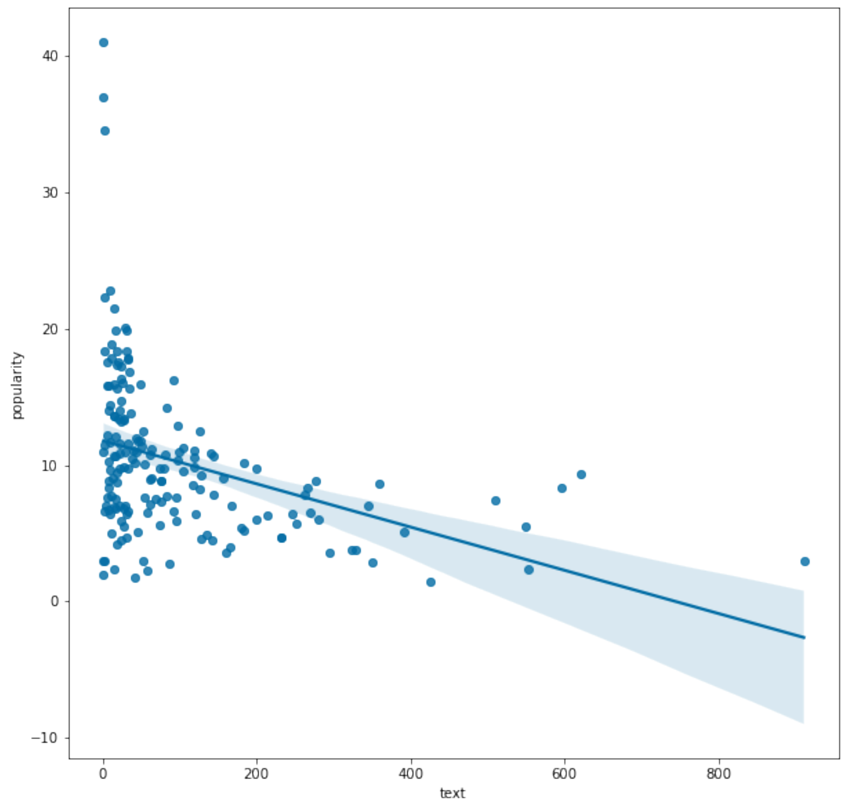

Figure 20: Popularity Score in Relation to Text Count

Owned

When looking at Instagram, and removing outliers that will be discussed later, the most popular content is in line with the findings of Cialdini et al., (1976), where athletics and winning teams become the most successful overall. The top post after the outliers were for the Guelph Gryphons (@GuelphGryphons), with a popularity score of 2319:

Figure 21: Guelph Gryphons Football Success

Second to that is the Brock Badgers (@brockbadgers), when they win an OUA title with the following post that had a popularity score of 1889:

Figure 22: Brock Badgers Provincial Win

Followed closely behind with another Brock Badgers (@brockbadgers) post about athletics and competing in a National Championship.

Figure 23: Brock Badgers to Provincials

The top ten pieces of content overall by all Institution's athletics accounts on Instagram are all related to winning sports teams and specifically competing in championships at a variety of levels when categorized with a content analysis. This indicates a clear correlation with the excitement that the community of followers feels with the relationship to winning teams and success for their alma mater. This furthers the research shared earlier in this dissertation by Cialdini, et al., (1976); Bowden (2011); and others and demonstrates that continued strategy to share this type of success would greatly impact the pride that students and alumni feel about their institution as an overall, and it is possible that this is their expression of loyalty as explained by McAlexander and Koenig (2001).

Within these owned channels there were a variety of topics as presented earlier. Using the Voyant tool, and removing connecting words, the following visualization of themes and topics was generated (shown below). The language related to games, winning and team are the most used, and generally the most successful overall with social content, aligning with the work presented earlier on winning teams and sports branding. It is important to note that the mentions of "go reds go", comes from the University of New Brunswick in relation to supporting their sports teams, but also is a hashtag used by all of their institutional accounts, not just within athletics. In fact, looking at all of their accounts, #goredsgo was used 4233 times, suggesting a strong branding component to their social media beyond just posts related to athletics.

Figure 24: Voyant Visualization - Athletics

This further supports the work by Gray and Wert-Gray (2012), as well as Cialdini, et al, (1976) who found that winning sports teams that can successfully implement a strong relationship marketing program are more likely to be able to develop longer-term relationships with their audience. Clearly there is an interest and excitement for followers of each account with any team success, therefore I would suggest that many of these organizations need to do a better job of sharing content in this topic area and encouraging relationship building opportunities over time around this theme. Additionally, based on the connection to brand that the University of New Brunswick is doing, it would be helpful to have future considerations for wholistic institutional strategy, where the team mascot or name, becomes a way to identify a community across a campus.

Within the patterns of posting for the owned media examples, the graph below shows the monthly number of social posts overall (Instagram and X) that each institution posted exclusively through their athletics accounts. This graph demonstrates that there are some institutions that are clearly posting more frequently than others, which seems to align with the institutions that were having winning teams as mentioned in the earlier examples.

Within the two outliers shown below, the University of Guelph had a great deal of posts in August and September about football training camp starting, and the start of their varsity season, and for the University of New Brunswick the majority of their posts were about their men’s and women’s hockey teams with game updates and player profiles. It should be noted however, in line with the findings overall mentioned earlier, very few of these posts had higher engagement scores overall, further indicating that posting more frequently does not increase a likelihood for success.

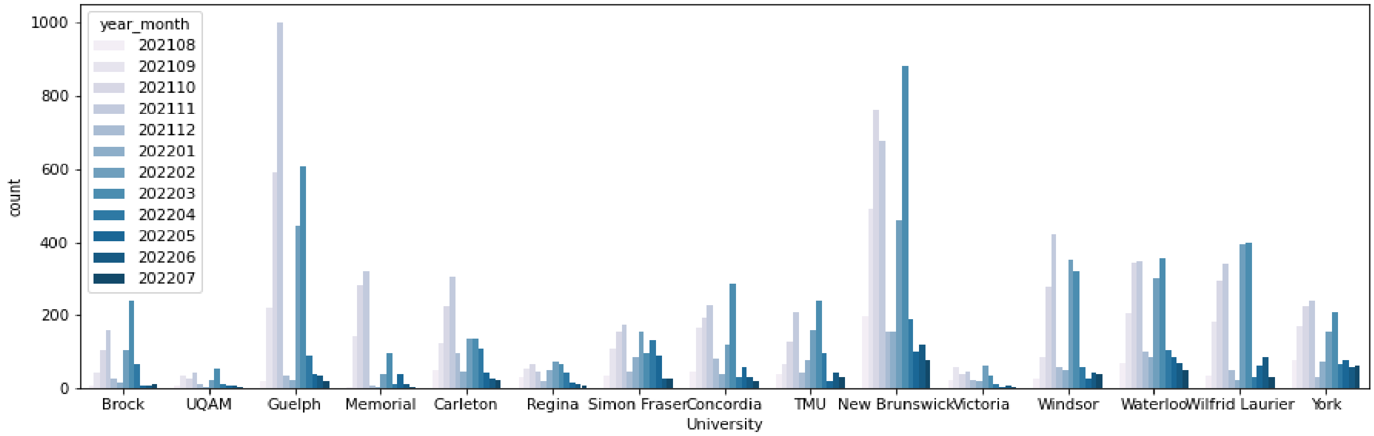

Figure 25: Timing of Posts by Athletics

Generally, when looking at the consistency of content for these types of accounts at all institutions there does seem to be a flow of information that mirrors the athletic year and the periods of success for certain schools. As shown above, those that did not have winning teams, and those that do not have a culture of athletics on their campus overall, do not have a high number of posts on their athletics accounts. The chart below shows the total number of posts for all athletics accounts combined over the year, indicating that much of the content aligns with the OUA season schedules, including peaks for many schools in August and September with Football (Ontario University Athletics, 2021) and other sports starting at that same time, and later peaks in February and March as Basketball and other sports begin to wrap up with championships (Ontario University Athletics, 2021).

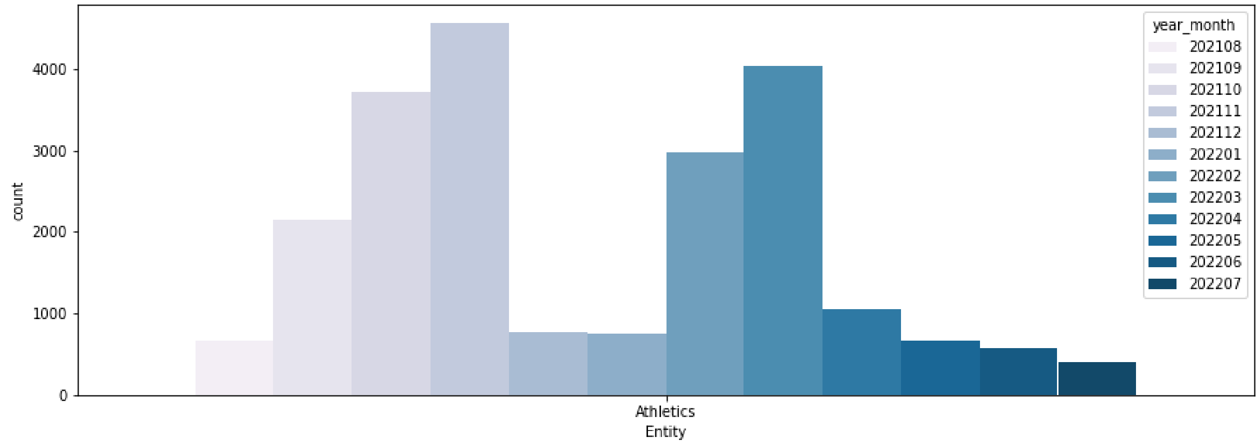

Figure 26: Overall Athletics Timing by Month

Overall posts by athletics accounts seem to have the most success in terms of engagement, popularity and sentiment with their audience. This indicates that this type of content will present the greatest opportunity for success for any institution to build community and relationship with their followers of students, alumni and community, as supported by the work mentioned throughout this dissertation. However, the challenge will still exist for those institutions that do not have a culture of athletics on campus, or those that do not have winning teams to share content on. It would be fair to say that of those posting, sharing, commenting and generally engaging with these posts, they were not all student-athletes themselves, but rather they are identifying with a shared success for their institution, enhancing the brand overall. This extension of community should be considered to have the greatest potential for growth in the Canadian University landscape, and one that should receive a stronger focus than has traditionally been done in the past, as shared earlier.

In consideration of this context, when looking at the OUA standings for the time period of this study, and further supported by the posts covered in this chapter for winning teams, it is clear that institutions like the University of Guelph, Carleton and Brock had more successful seasons in various sports. It would be interesting in future research to review the OUA standings overtime, year over year but also month over month to see if the winning teams experienced greater success and social media engagement in relation to their successes in the season.

CHAPTER 7: FINDINGS - ALUMNI

Paid

Of the 15 university alumni accounts reviewed, only five alumni accounts in total posted an ad on Instagram and Facebook. Concordia University (3), TMU (1), University of Regina (1), UQAM (1), and University of Waterloo (1), all ran ads for under $100, excluding one of Concordia's three ads during that time, where they spent between $100-$199. All the ads had a total impression count under 1000, excluding one ad from Concordia with the larger spend, which had 20,000 – 25,000 impressions overall. The ad below and the corresponding data was pulled from the Meta Library.

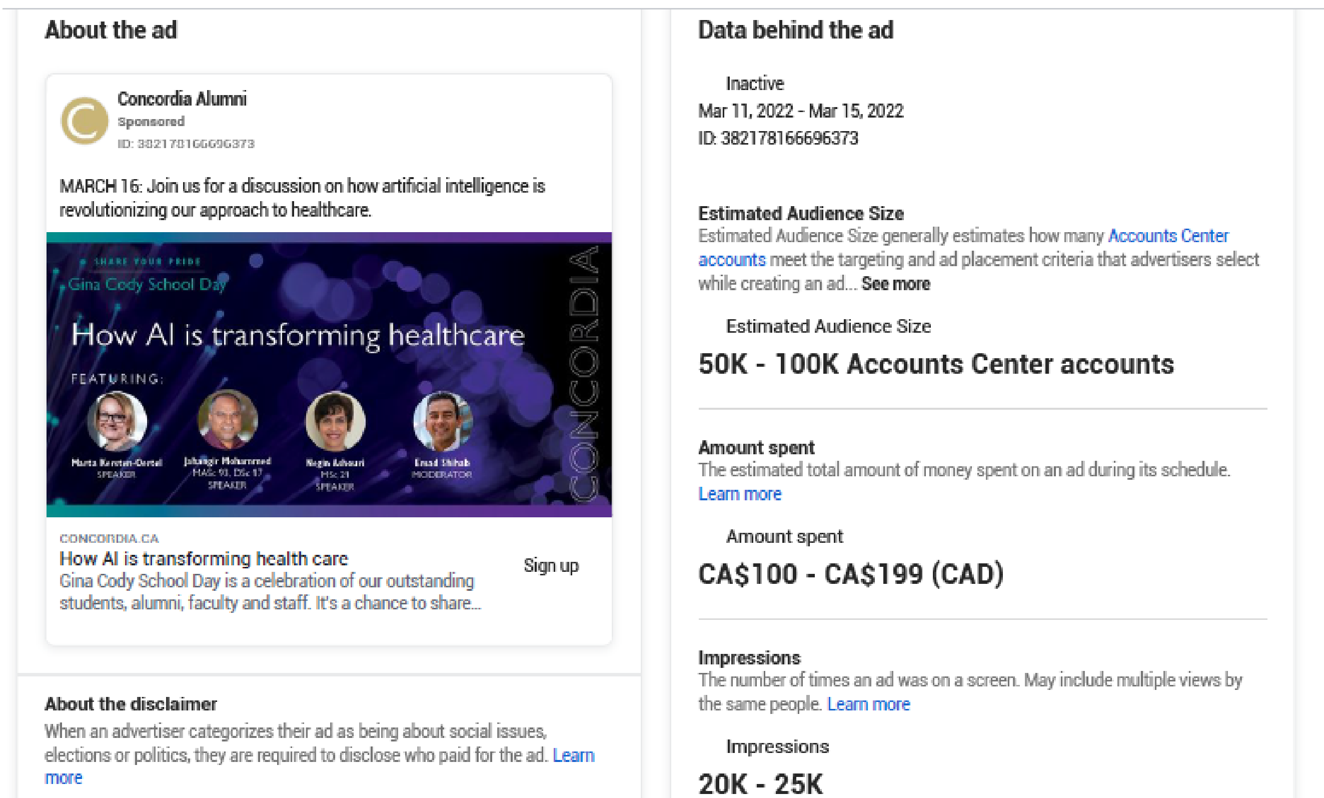

Figure 27: Concordia Alumni Advertisement Summary

Of the seven ads reviewed, none featured anything about giving to the institution specifically, which is interesting to note given the mandate alumni offices would be to generate funds and donations for the institution. However, all but one of the ads reviewed contained information about an event the alumni office was hosting, either online or in person, with an action request to register for the event, which would be more in line with a community building event as a categorization, and still an important function for the alumni offices in maintaining community and relationship with their alumni.

Although not available publicly, it would be interesting to consider the registration numbers for these events, in relation to the spend done on the advertising, and the relatively low impressions achieved, to then review the return on investment. The importance of events in relationship building was discussed earlier by O'Neil (2007) as an indicator of a strong relationship with an institution, so it should be considered in strategy. One would assume that such small spends were done to boost a registration that may have otherwise had low numbers, especially with in person events in an immediate post COVID event plan.

Earned

As mentioned earlier, if looking at the quoted content as a value equal to earned media, quoted content for the alumni accounts performs significantly lower on average than athletics or central accounts. Removing the outliers, the highest performing piece of content on X comes from the University of New Brunswick (@UNBalumni), with only 19 quoted shares of the following tweet:

Figure 28: UNB Nostalgia Connection

The second highest performing piece of content on X was from Concordia University (@ConcordiaAlumni) sharing their top 50 alumni list, which presumably would be from shares with those that are mentioned within this list stating:

Figure 29: Concordia Alumni Success and Ambassadors

Despite this fact, there were only 13 quoted pieces of content on X in relation to this topic. This example would seem like a missed opportunity given the space to connect with the 50 alumni listed in their article and asking those individuals to continue to share and amplify the message from the alumni account within their own social networks. It is possible that there was user generated content created that cannot be captured within the data in this study, but without a link to the alumni accounts there seems to be a missed opportunity for a strategy to connect with a new audience.

Interestingly, the majority of outliers for the alumni accounts relate to social media contests that promote sharing and mentioning the accounts for entries, a popular and common way to promote user generated content (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). The top ten pieces of content by popularity for the alumni accounts are contests, and this would require further review to see if these contests yielded any success overall, as the intent is to expand a social network and have others use their social capital to expand a following. There is a great deal of research to show that this type of content does not indicate that these contests are effective in the long term for growing followers (Antin & Churchill, 2011).

Second to content around nostalgia and alumni lists, there were a variety of posts about Giving Tuesday and donating to campus that did have some success for quotes and mentions. This does appear somewhat surprising in relation to the other findings in this work, but on a closer content review the content seems to be related to specific campaigns and achievements marked within the time period of Giving Tuesday. For example, the University of Waterloo Alumni account (@UWaterlooalumni) shared the following that had 6 quoted X posts and a popularity score of just 30:

Figure 30: University of Waterloo Giving Tuesday Success

And one post done by the University of Guelph (@UofGAlumni) for the same campaign of Giving Day that happens Nationally for all charities, with only five quoted X posts and a popularity score of 24:

Figure 31: University of Guelph Giving Tuesday Request

This seems to suggest that although on a surface level there would be potential for success with this content in terms of supporting a culture of giving and donating, and an audience interested in the content, the scoring in relation to the other examples included in this study shows that there is very little success for these types of posts for alumni accounts. Of the thousands of X posts and Instagram posts across the year, only 798 posts mentioned giving and donations with an action to give. Overall, this needs to be considered given the greater context of this work, because it suggests that giving, and having alumni feel compelled to donate and share information about donating to their institution is not a matter of sharing giving content, but rather a result that likely comes out of building a greater community, in further support of the work mentioned earlier in this dissertation.

Of note, there were also a variety of posts that had some success with a focus on convocation on campus, both welcoming new alumni to the institution, but also encouraging alumni to send messages of welcome to others or to share their own convocation memories, furthering some important moments of nostalgia. These posts had similar success overall with each other, but still very minimal results in comparison to the work across all institutional channels.

Shared

With shared content being categorized by the organic social reach and emotions, compared to paid content, the alumni accounts seem to be the least popular overall for content within their audience. When looking at the overall popularity of content (shown below in the multi box plot below) as a correlation to the number of messages, as represented to the left of the graph, most of the content posted by the alumni accounts do not see success overall on their content. The University of Windsor, University of Victoria, University of Regina, and Carleton University overall have the highest success, and have fewer outliers overall, in comparison with athletics earlier.

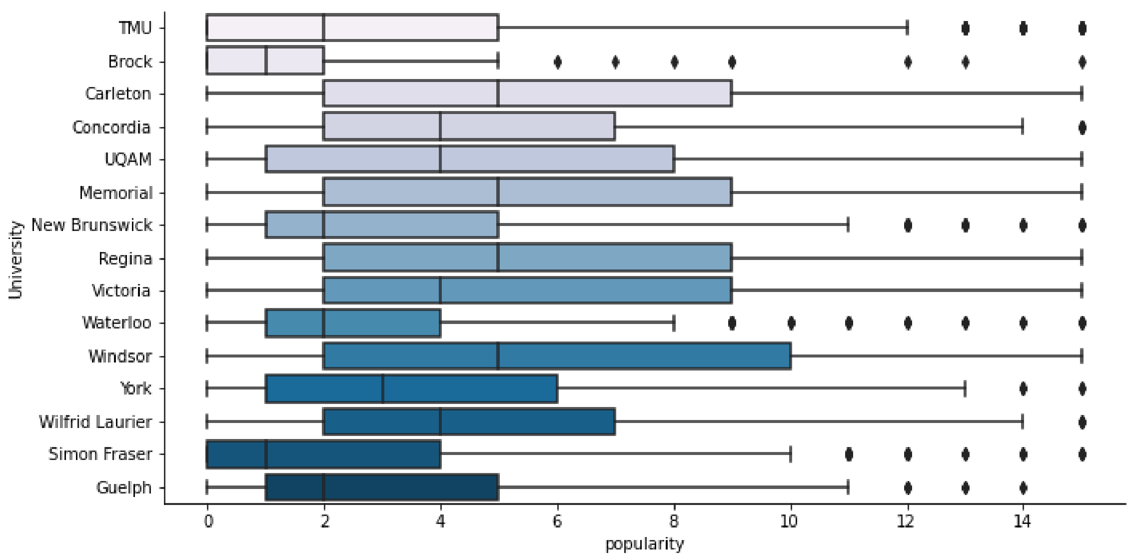

Figure 32: Overall Popularity - Alumni

Brock University has the lowest popularity for their alumni social media, with TMU and Simon Fraser also experiencing lower popularity. Brock has a low number of posts on their alumni accounts overall, with only 217 combined, but TMU and Simon Fraser have well over that, with 1929 and 1124 respectively for all platforms. This suggests that for TMU and Simon Fraser, they are using their accounts consistently, but perhaps do not have the engagement within their community that the other institutions seem to experience.

It is likely that the lack of outliers compared to athletics is related more to the business model that exists within athletics compared to alumni, as generally there will be fewer opportunities to find more significant social media successes, compared to the examples of winning sports teams and athletes shown earlier. Where this could have potentially been better utilized would be for alumni accounts to identify the shared value of posting winning teams on their own accounts, but of the institutions studied, there are no examples of such posts.

Taking a closer look at the content by institutions individually, University of Windsor and Carleton are more popular, but there tends to not be a more standout institution indicating success overall. When looking then at the popular posts of content in relation to the sentiment score, the majority of the posts by alumni accounts are found to be more neutral, which may also relate to the lower portions of success overall. As mentioned earlier in this sub-section, most of the posts are about contests, events and the occasional post on nostalgia, so generally those types of posts are not encouraging engagement and emotion overall with the audience in comparison to winning and success.

When looking at the overall popularity of content (shown below in the multi box plot below) as a relationship to the number of messages, as represented to the left of the graph, most of the content posted by the alumni accounts have a varying amount of success. In contrast to the athletics accounts reviewed earlier, there are a great number of posts by the alumni accounts that vary in the amount of text and popularity. On the athletics chart, it is clear that there is a more condensed margin between the message amount and the popularity. With the alumni accounts it is clear that there are a great deal of messages being shared; however, the popularity overall is more scattered, proving that there is a real inconsistency in terms of what type of content might work best with this audience type.

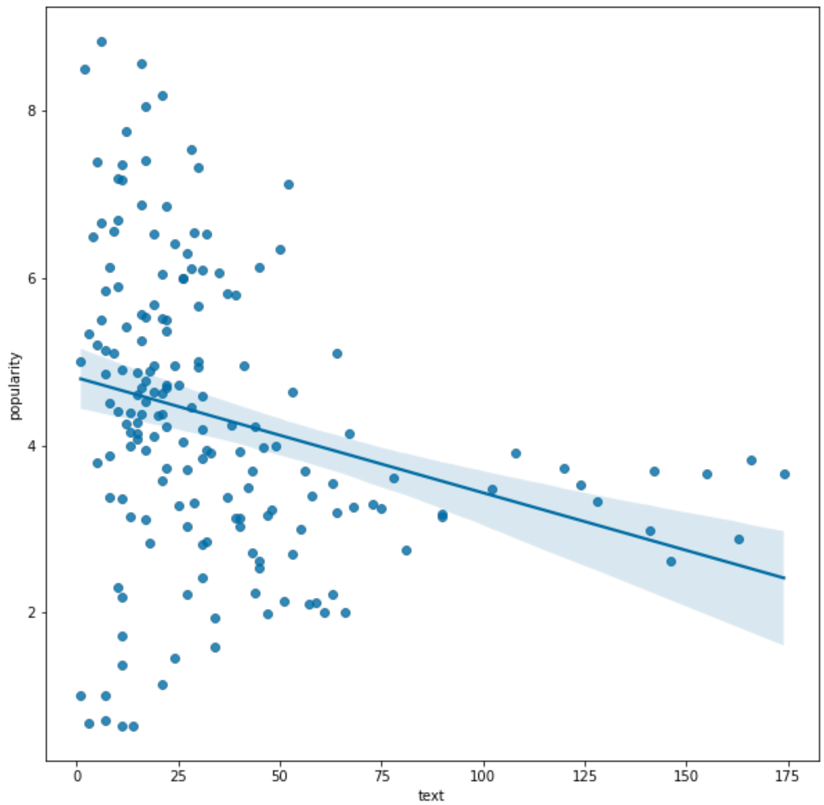

Figure 33: Popularity Score in Relation to Text Count

When looking at the content examples within this chapter, it is possible to see that the more successful posts tend to be related to sharing success of other alumni, or the alumni lists that have been successful for many institutions. Each of these types of posts require a greater amount of text, and therefore are good examples of opportunities to build longer and more in-depth social content that connects with an audience for higher engagement and popularity as defined here.

Owned

When looking at X, the top posts for popularity when removing the outliers discussed later in this work and removing contests and convocation, the next popular posts had a variety of content themes, which were reviewed using the qualitative content analysis discussed earlier. The top post was by Carleton University Alumni (@CarletonAlumni), as shown on the right with a popularity score of 1293.

Figure 34: Carleton University Donation Acknowledgement

Looking at the individual social media accounts on Instagram, Toronto Metropolitan University Alumni is the most active account by a significant margin overall. This in contrast with the popularity score overall for the TMU furthers the earlier finding that in fact the most active accounts are not as a whole the most successful accounts with followers and engagement. Their highest popularity score was 1233, which was for a contest, but the most popular posts after that were just over 200 in popularity score, and of the 12,531 messages reviewed by TMU, only 26 of them have a popularity score over 100. This would demonstrate there is a significant amount of content being shared, but overall, it is not met with equal levels of engagement, so the strategy overall is not successful with their audience.

Unfortunately, looking at the next most popular posts overall is a much less successful post by Toronto Metropolitan University (@alumnitmu), with a popularity score of just 233 (a significant change from the most popular post above):

Figure 35: TMU Community Event

This suggests, in line with the earlier findings in this work, that the alumni accounts at all institutions do not experience the same level of success, and it seems, the opportunities for brand and community building success are not consistent and easily identifiable in terms of content type, in comparison to the athletics successes mentioned earlier.

When looking at the patterns of posting content for the alumni accounts all together, there does seem to be slightly more consistency in the timing for posts compared to athletics and the central channels, but there are some peak content times around convocation times in October and June. This is in support of the content findings discussed earlier, and in line with the business model and goals for the alumni office as they welcome new alumni to the institution in hopes of continuing a relationship with those individuals for the eventual goal of fundraising.

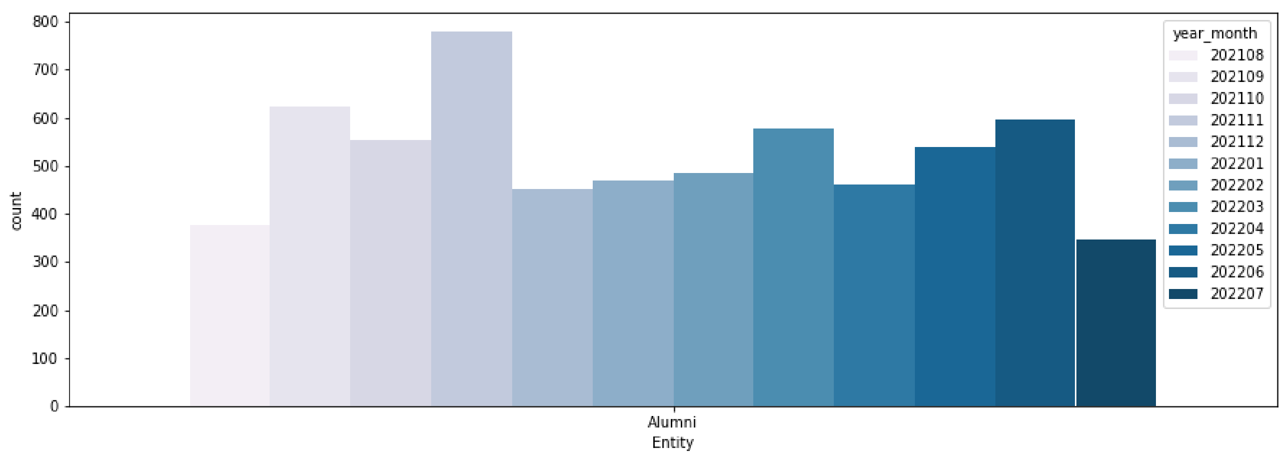

Figure 36: Overall Alumni Timing by Month

When then looking at each institution individually for patterns in their posts, TMU does have the highest volume of content overall compared to other alumni accounts as shown in the chart below. This does however align with a significant outlier of a name change for their institution, which is discussed later in its own sub-chapter review. The

University of Waterloo also has a higher amount of posts in November, but when reviewing the content from this period they appear to have content related to an event that was happening during that time, as well as their alumni magazine. This does not seem to be related to a more consistent strategy as shown by the lower amount of posts after that peak period.

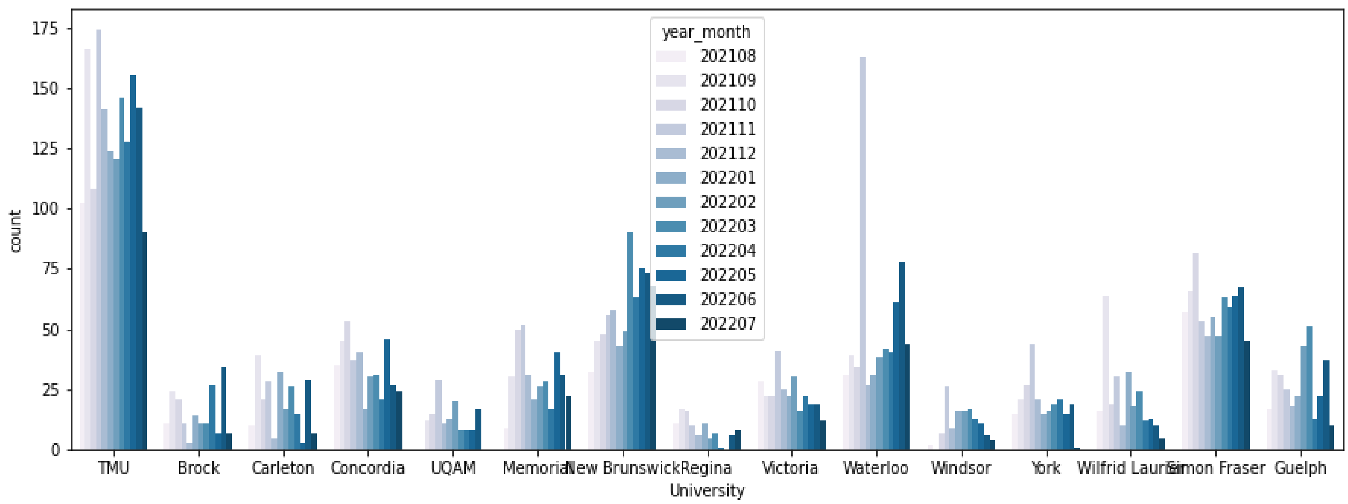

Figure 37: Timing of Posts by Alumni Accounts by Month

Looking at the language for the alumni accounts using Voyant, if the intent of the department is to build community and relationships so that followers feel they are a part of something, there is a fair amount of language that supports this idea. Words like

Figure 38: Voyant Visualization - Alumni

"learn", "register", "community" and "join", indicate an attempt at building a relationship with a group well after graduation. This matches the research found earlier around the importance of building community with alumni and shows that the departments understand the nature of the work they should be aiming to achieve, however in relation to the popularity scoring earlier, they are not successfully providing this content in a way that motivates their audience and creates a sentiment for sharing and involvement in the community.

This particular chapter would be the most significant area for future research, but one that would require a greater relationship with each institution to review the consistencies in their giving data and giving history in relation to their social media posts. For example, do they find greater success with donations on certain social media posts, and if so, are they tracking that data to guide strategy. This is reviewed in more depth within the discussion of this work but given the importance of the work within the alumni department for the future financial prosperity of the organization, this consideration is critical. Additionally, future research should consider the lack of giving messages contained within these posts overall, which seems troublesome if the primary function of the department is to encourage alumni giving. Overall, it seems the focus on the work of events and generally community building, but little content aimed at moving people through a relationship cycle to ultimately consider donations in their content strategy.

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS – CENTRAL

Paid

Table 3: Total Campaign Spend and Number of Campaigns

Total Spend by Campaign	Total Count per Spend
less than $100	39
100 - 199	12
200 - 299	7
300 - 399	6
1500 - 2000	2
400 - 499	1
8000 - 9000	1
2000 - 2500	1
500 - 599	1
15,000 - 20,000	1
900 - 999	1
100 - 199	1
3500 - 4000	1
Grand Total	**74**

Overall, the most amount of money was spent through each institution on their central account advertisements. Of the 15 institutions reviewed, ten had posted ads on Facebook, Instagram and Messenger over the time reviewed. The chart below shows the total amount spent per campaign, using the ranges provided within the Facebook Meta Library, as well as the total number of campaigns that were within the ranges provided by Facebook. This is a significant change from the accounts for athletics and alumni that had either none or very few advertisements with spends, and in some cases shows a significant investment by the institution to utilize social media advertising to expand their reach and views for their posts and content.

Most campaigns spent less than $100 Canadian as shown in the chart above, and only a small number had spent over $1000. Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) lead the overall count for advertisements across all the platforms, and on an initial review it would seem likely that this would align with rebrand that the University underwent in April 2022 (Rancic, 2022) from Ryerson University, which will be discussed later. However, TMU seems to be consistently active in their purchasing of advertisements from November 2021 to June 2022, and none of the paid ad content related to or referenced the name change in any way. The chart below reviews the total number of advertisements purchased over the year by each institution.

Table 4: University Campaign Totals

Institution	**Total Advertisements Over the Year**
Toronto Metropolitan University	33
University of Victoria	11
Concordia university	8
UQAM	6
York University	5
University of New Brunswick	5
University of Regina	3
Simon Fraser University	1
University of Windsor	1
Wilfrid Laurier University	1
Grand Total	**74**

Within the advertisements reviewed, the content focus varied greatly by not only each institution by also within institutions. There were only three universities that mentioned anything about giving or donating within their central social media channel for paid content. The University of Victoria, University of New Brunswick and the University of Regina spent a combined total of $700 – 900 over the year for advertisements related to giving specifically.

Figure 39: York University Advertisement

It should also be a consideration that York University has several paid advertisements around a potential medical school (one example shown to the left) that they were working on campaigning community support for, which would in turn most likely be a longer-term capital fundraising campaign should the school be approved by the government (York University, March 17, 2023).

Using the Voyant tool to analyze the paid advertisements specifically, we can see that most paid posts were about inviting people to attend or to listen to an event with a variety of topics that the institution was trying to present as a thought leader in. The infographic below shows the overall topics, with the most frequent words found overall were join (20); today (17); learn (17); world (16); issues (14).

Figure 40: Voyant Visualization - Central Communications Advertisements

This would seem in line with more community building category events, for the public, alumni, students, and employees to attend and engage on a variety of topics. Similarly, many of the topics presented for event discussion seem to align with other important dates within a calendar year. For example, many schools featured topics about women's rights or research by women around International Women's Day, such as the post by the University of Victoria (2022):

> Join us for a conversation with leaders who will share their experiences and discuss how we can support, inspire and empower people, and create more equitable access to opportunities in the workplace. In celebration of International Women's Day, Women Leading Change - Break the Bias highlights powerful voices leading change across industries in which women remain underrepresented.

This further supports the work by O'Neil (2007) also clarifies that relationship as an alumnus/alumna, including attending events, is an indicator of a strong relationship with an institution, and it is worth considering if those that do register are then recorded in the data maintained by the institution, for future donation requests.

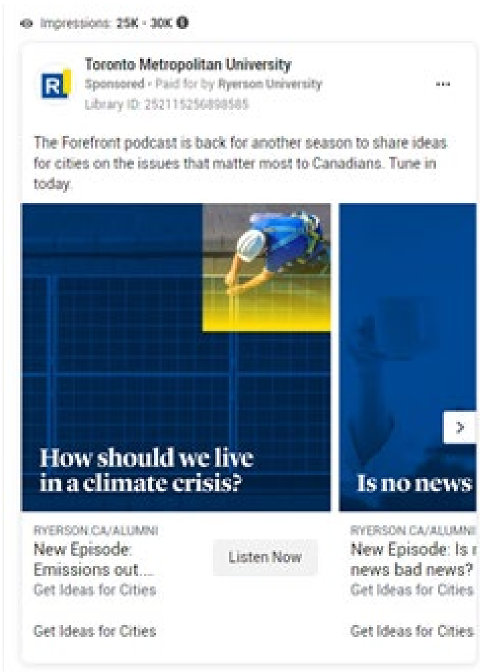

Figure 41: TMU Advertisement

Most other universities purchased ads seemed to be a part of a larger campaign for student recruitment, and in many instances were repeated posts with at times a different visual, but consistent text, or at times just a slightly different text. TMU has 6 of their 33 advertisements related to a podcast, with identical posts for each of the ads (example shown to the left).

UQAM (based in Quebec) for example, had different posts within the same campaign, all discussing their diversity of programs and offerings, with examples shown below. Translated to English the campaign says "At UQAM, we don't just dream of a better world. We create it. Find out about our 300 study programs," and each advertisement features a different major research area for the institution.

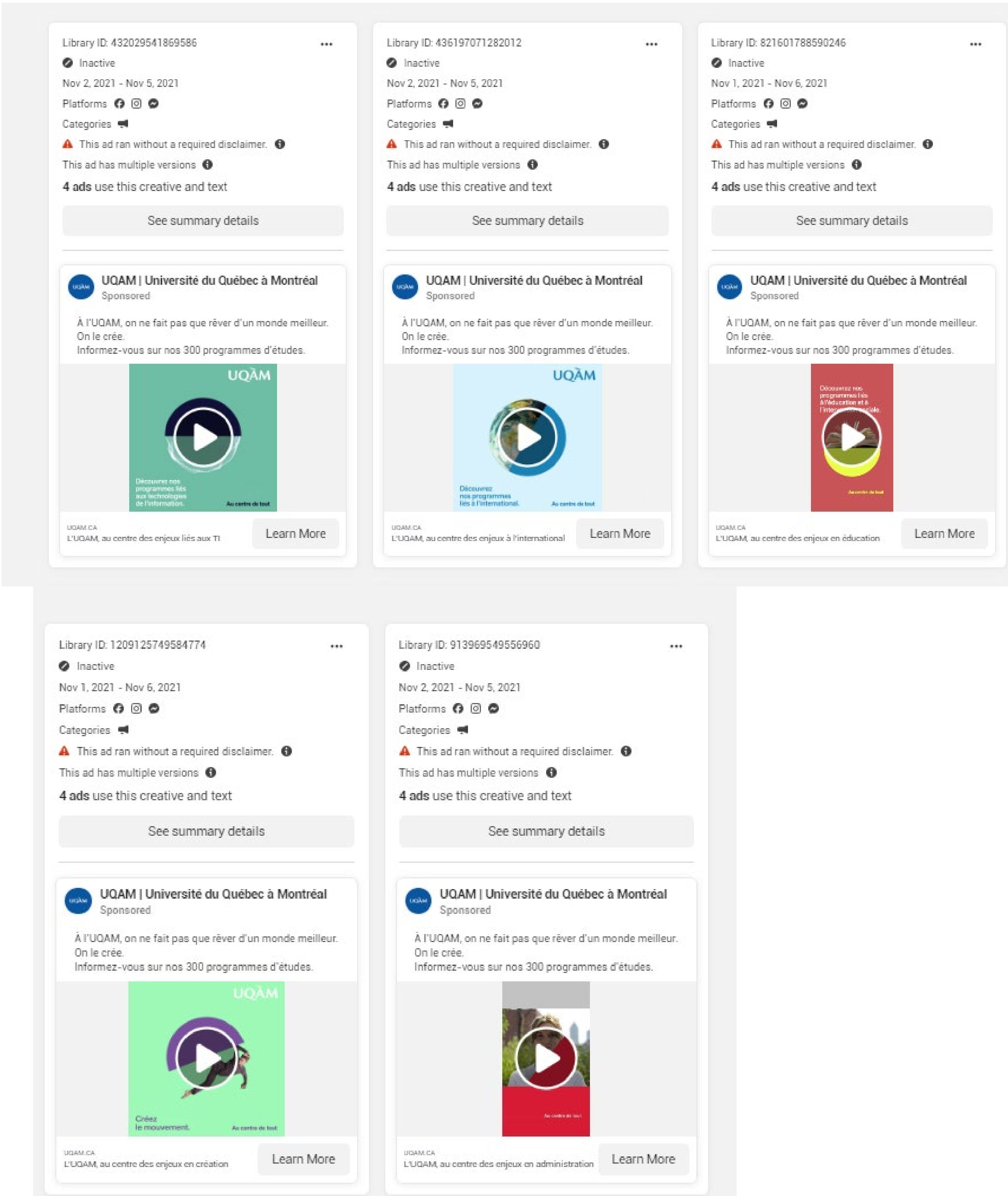

Figure 42: UQAM Advertisement Campaign

Earned

Central communications channels for universities seem to struggle overall with bringing emotion and engagement into their content. I suspect that this has to do with very little room for movement in the style and tone of the content shared, as this becomes the central communications vehicle for the entire institution, however, I think that this has an impact on the ability of the institution to have successful content overtime.

Within their X content, the central university channels found very little success, and outside of the outliers that are mentioned further in the conclusions of this work, there were very little quoted content pieces shared for individual networks. In fact, outside of the two that will be discussed further in this work, the top pieces of earned content were around the institution's policies on COVID-19, as this data was pulled during a time when some schools were moving back to campuses and vaccination policies were changing after a longer COVID shutdown in Canada.

For example, the following X post was shared by Brock University (@BrockUniversity) in March 2022, and was rated the third highest post on X for quoting and shares by others within their social networks with 154 quoted posts and 332 reposts:

Figure 43: Brock University COVID announcement

Similar is true for the next few top posts, and the first post that has success that is not about COVID and a return to campus, is a long distance behind the others by Memorial University (@MemorialU), with 61 quoted posts and 10 shares:

Figure 44: Memorial University Institutional Decision-Making

The content posted about COVID and returning to campus does not fall within the categories of communications best practices as described by Grunig (2002) and others generally but offers a timely piece of information for the campus community, at a time when many people were still uncertain following the pandemic. Similarly, the data shows many other institutions had their highest earned content from this type of tweet, and informative pieces about vaccinations in August, right before students were to arrive back on campus after the summer. This indicates that it was a piece of information that followers wanted to share, but also a topic that activated their community.

Overall, it seems a missed opportunity to review this data and see the accounts that have such large followings, fail to identify leaders within their communities and leverage that relationship for social media success as a whole.

Shared

By a significant margin, the most successful shared piece of content from the central communications accounts based on popularity and sentiment were around the death of a beloved alumnus, and the name change for Toronto Metropolitan University. These are reviewed in detail later in this dissertation, but after reviewing their respective totals as they appear to be outliers to this topic, the next available pieces of content are significantly smaller in success.

Similarly, if the content centred around COVID is considered an outlier because it is a rare event, when removing COVID protocol information and back to campus policies, the next most popular theme in content relates to convocation in the spring and fall, generally June and October, similar to the success found by the alumni accounts as discussed earlier in this work.

The overall spread for text to popularity indicates that there is a great deal of work that goes into the strategy overall for the institution, and that in keeping with the larger size of the audiences within these networks, they do fare better overall in popularity. It would be beneficial then for each institution to look at the community and relationship building to see if the popularity and strategy is working to engage this community for institutional success.

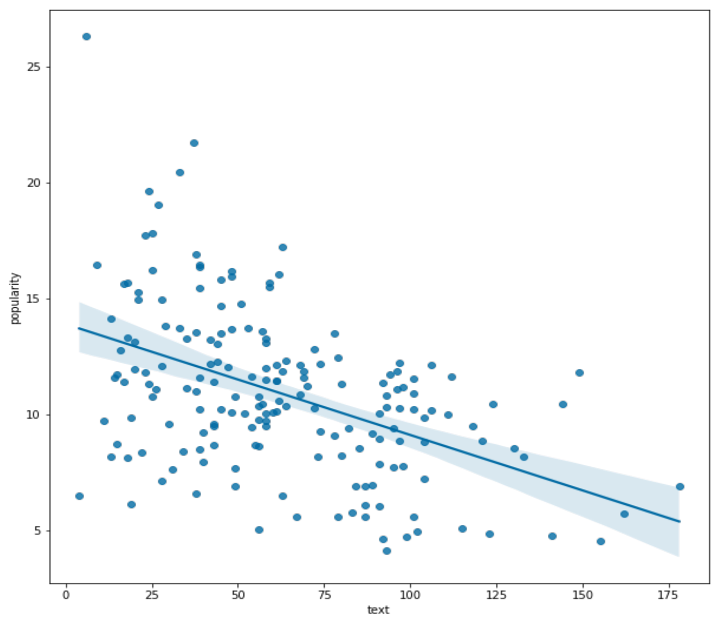

Figure 45: Popularity Score in Relation to Text Count

When looking at each institution individually in a box plot chart, there seems to not be a standout account for success, which further supports the idea that no school is doing their social strategy overly well. There are, however, a greater number of outliers in this category overall compared to the others, as represented by the dots on this box plot chat, and as mentioned earlier in the examples of a name change, COVID pandemic protocols and the death of a beloved alumna, further detailed in another chapter.

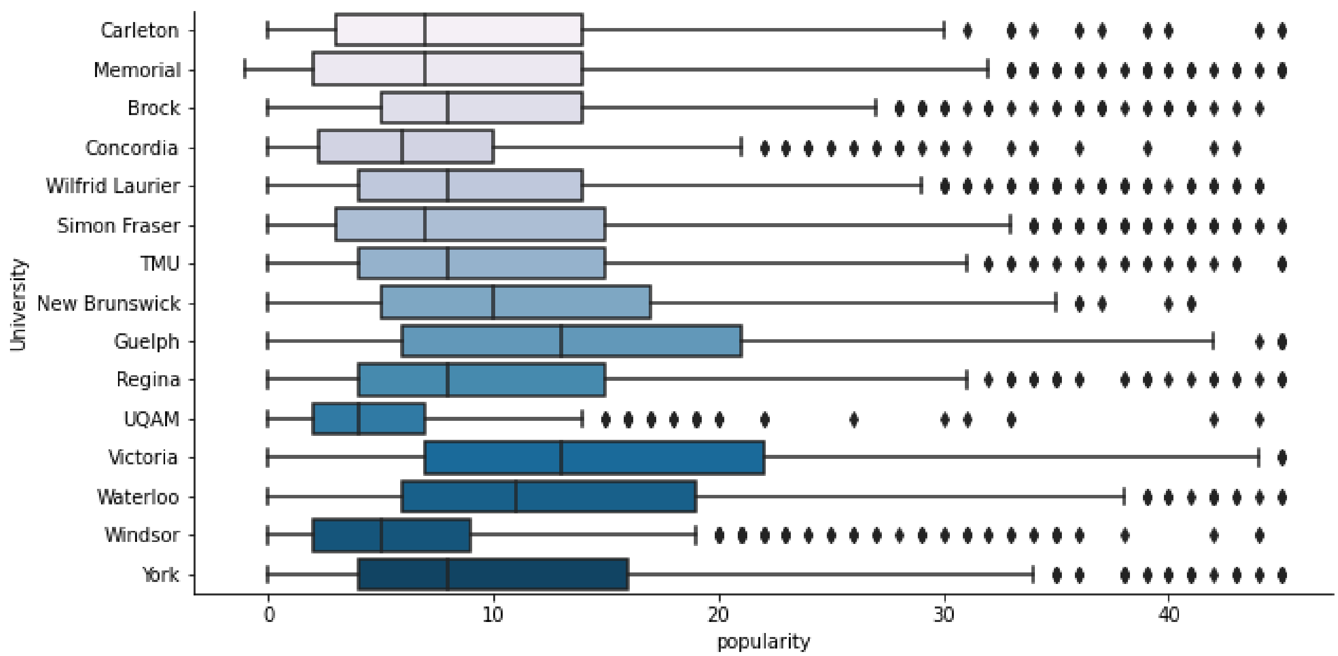

Figure 46: Overall Popularity - Central Communications

The chart above does show that the University of Victoria and the University of Guelph are once again some of the more successful institutions by social media popularity, and this has been consistent throughout this work. These institutions have clearly established a closer relationship with their audience that encourages engagement across all of their social channels. In contrast, the University of Windsor and UQAM do have lower scores overall, indicating that they have not been able to establish a stronger community for the central institutional branding. UQAM in particular is an interesting consideration as they have, as noted above, spent on paid advertisements for their recruitment of new students, but as indicated in the chart, they have failed to find popularity and engagement with the current students, alumni or the broader community.

When looking at the sentiment for central communications content overall, the majority seems to favour a neutral sentiment score overall. Brock University again seems to have the greatest likelihood of scoring a more positive sentiment compared to other institutions, but this does not seem to relate to any content theme or topic specifically. This could indicate that those who are active in following the central Brock University social media account are more tightly connected to the institution, and potentially there is a connection that is built by having a strong student relationship as discussed by McAlexander and Koenig (2001), with winning teams and a smaller student population of 19,000, relative to some of the others. When looking at their content specifically, one of the higher rated posts for popularity, and one that had the highest score on sentiment, was actually not of an institutional message, or one that shared information about the University, but rather just a photo of a campus building in the colours of the Ukrainian flag (blue and yellow), with a simple message of two hearts in the same colour (as shown below).

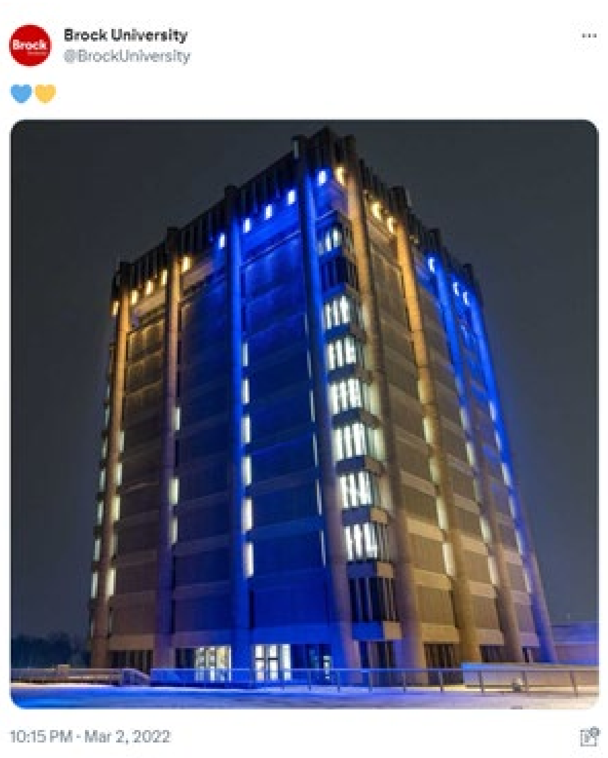

Figure 47: Brock University Most Popular Post Example

This demonstrates that there is not a need for deep strategy and pushing an internal message and priorities at all times in social media posts, but it is possible that a post that is simple but supports and fosters community can find success. It can also be noted that within a review of Brock University's social media posts, it is clear that they have a great deal of posts that relate to community engagement and current topics, both globally and internationally, which seems to provide more opportunity for community building outside of institutional priorities and narrative.

The next highest sentiment post overall, and one that has a high popularity score of 228, is by Memorial University, in support of a National Curling Team that is led by an alumnus of the university, which was an X repost of the original post by the alumnus after qualifying for the Olympics.


Memorial University
@MemorialU

Congratulations to @TeamGushue for once again representing #NL and Canada! Wishing you all the best @bejijing2022 Olympics🥌. With two @MemorialUAlumni on #TeamCanada, we can't lose!🌟

Team Gushue @TeamGushue · Nov 28, 2021
WE DID IT!!! We felt every bit of support you sent us this week. We did it together! #trials2021 #2022beijingolympics #TeamCanada

@KubotaCanadaLtd @MapleLeafFoods @PurolatorInc
@Eastlink #oxfordfrozenfoods @HardlineCurling @AshamCurling RMS ...
Show more

12:46 PM · Nov 29, 2021

Figure 48: Memorial University Ambassador and Winning Team

This would further support the earlier findings around athletics and the general feelings of support for winning teams and shared success.

Owned

It is clear from the language on the owned central communications channels (excluding the paid content that was reviewed earlier) that students are the focus of their work and strategy. The Voyant tool pulled the most common terms and when reviewing the content for themes, with students (2252); campus (2119); learn (2082); student (1455); university (1401) the top five most common terms in the data overall. UQAM still appears within this dataset, as they did have a significant amount of social media posts, with 1347, and almost all of them include “UQAM” in the content.

Figure 49: Voyant Visualization - Central Communications

This is in line with the strategy of many institutions overall and best practices, where students and the student population are the central focus. This supports the relationship marketing work by Bowden (2011), where the relationship approach for an institution should be that students are customers of a brand, and that the relationship should be fostered overtime.

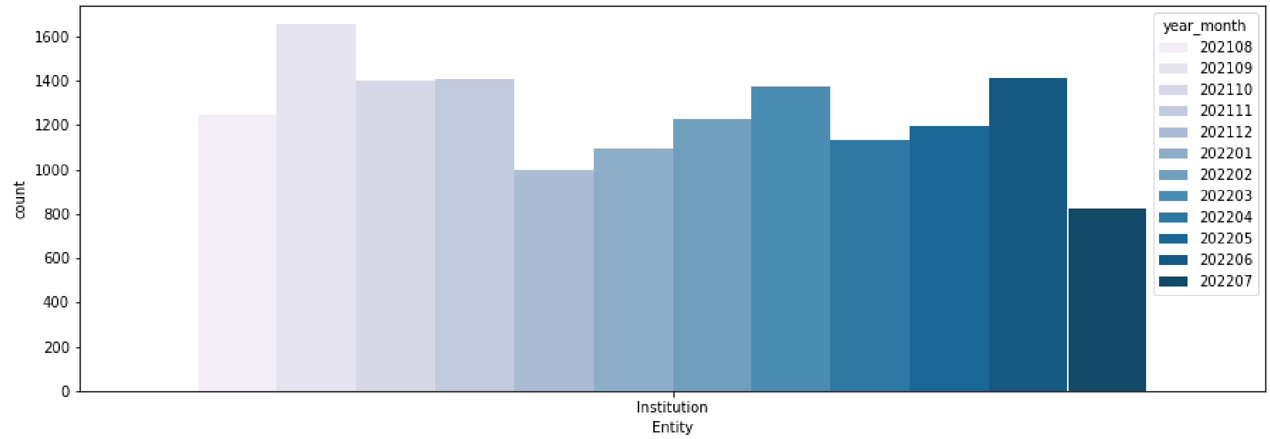

Figure 50: Timing of Posts by Central Communications by Month

In consideration of the pattern of content and the timing of content, the chart above demonstrates that for most institutions there is some consistency that follows with the school year. This seems to suggest that most of the schools use their accounts for student led communication, rather than considering the potential of using these types of accounts for more broad community building and connection with a diversity of stakeholders. This aligns as well with the paid content as mentioned above, because the central accounts work to recruit students, and then share communications related to the announcements important for that core relationship to their business. It is also important to note that, as mentioned earlier, COVID protocols and the timing of changes on campus also factor into this count.

CHAPTER 9: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned earlier in this work, within alumni giving, and in line with the work of Mann (2007), the key considerations for giving in post-secondary education should be:

(1) Charitable giving - those who are motivated by altruism, reciprocity, and direct benefits.

The examples above show that there are very few moments in the communications strategy for an institution where there is a direct ask, request for funds, or an appeal to the direct benefits that alumni should feel within their potential for charitable giving, in direct contrast with the work of Mann (2007). As an observation, it appears as though institutions are afraid to directly ask alumni for support for the institution or for a particular cause, and within the rare occasion that a request is posed, it does not appear to be a part of a bigger fundraising campaign and strategy overall.

(2) Organizational identification - people who define themselves by association with an organization and in turn feel a strong connection to it and celebrate its successes (for example through athletic wins or academic advancements and achievements by faculty and other alumni).

As shown within the data, there is success overall for institutions that share athletic wins and or academic achievements for faculty and alumni (for example the list of top alumni). These types of organizational identification boosts do not always seem to include a larger strategy, and often exist in a sole post. If organizations put greater strategy in the opportunities to boost identification, they would have a greater reach and engagement with their followers overall, allowing a greater opportunity to increase the feelings of prestige and pride.

(3) Social identification - their identity is influenced by how they group themselves into social categories, and the deep connections they share with that sub-group influence them (for example, an opportunity to connect with smaller faculties, connected student groups, clubs and associations).

In comparison across each of the channels, the athletics accounts seem to have the greatest success overall, indicating that the sub-group of athletics and teams allow for a connected group of students to share a deeper connection. Second to athletics, the posts that shared messages related to specific faculties, or departments or with attention to a particular leader at the institution also had great success, in support of the theories of social identification.

(4) Economics - the more a need is presented to them, the more likely they are to give (this can be particularly important for appeals made around students in need, a connection with research they might be passionate about or a respected faculty member).

The economics are very rarely shared as posts by the institution, and thus they have not allowed a chance to be tested overtime. On the instances where there were requests to give to the institution specifically, as shown later in this research with the outliers, alumni responded with great engagement and success.

(5) Services philanthropic - those who feel value out of the programs and services offered as a post-graduate (often alumni associations offer further support, events, and other opportunities to connect, volunteer and stay involved with the institution well after graduation).

Most institutions' alumni accounts, the department mainly focused on fundraising did not have fundraising posts in their content over the year, based on the thematic content analysis, and instead mainly focused on events and community building. These posts overall had some varied success, and this was also the only focus of paid content for the alumni-based accounts.

(6) Relationship-marketing - alumni and students are viewed as customers, who see their relationship with the organization to be either transactional, or highly relational. Those who view it as highly relational feel connected, whereas those who view it as transactional view it as an exchange.

Many institutions have approached their social media accounts as a way to share information and content with primarily their student audience, and at times, their potential student audience, but few have worked to cultivate a relationship that goes beyond transactional. There are only a few examples, mainly Brock University and the University of Guelph as discussed earlier with their athletics accounts specifically, who seem to consistently build a relationship that goes beyond transactional, and because of their work on relational elements they have much greater success overall. They do this by sharing community updates, successes, but also opportunities for the community to connect.

Outliers – A Message of Giving

As mentioned earlier, of the thousands of X posts and Instagram posts across the year, only 798 posts mentioned giving and donations with an action to give, however on closer review, many of them were not about giving to the institution. In addition to the outliers noted below, there are several that were related to the COVID pandemic and either mask initiatives or specific activities around the pandemic. This includes one mentioned earlier for an athlete that was making masks for her community and was looking for donations to support her work.

For example, one institution had a well-known and beloved professor from Concordia, Nadia Chaudhri passed away, and the University started a fund to support the research and the work that she did at the institution. Nadia Chaudhri was also an active leader within her community on X of over 100,000 followers, which further supports the earlier work on social capital, and the importance of finding influencers to amplify a message by Li and Bernoff (2008) and others.

Figure 51: Concordia University Memorial Post

Within this context, Nadia shared Concordia's messages, stories and even had several X posts related to promoting pride for Concordia during her battle with ovarian cancer, and when she passed away the

University shared the news resulting in the highest popularity score overall for content in the entire study, with 7103.

By connecting one beloved professor that alumni cared about, and a cause that they felt moved by, Concordia was able to raise $616,064 from 8,614 donors, within days (CBC, 2021). This example is considered an outlier to the other pieces of data reviewed, and no other comparable was found to that significance.

In contrast, the University of Victoria had a soccer alumnus pass away and posted the following:

Figure 52: University of Victoria Memorial Post

This post received the highest popularity rating overall (2992) for the University's account; however, they did not have a fund or donation request that would be in contribution to the University. This would seem like a missed opportunity to connect a group of alumni and students who are motivated with a particular leader within their community, to the benefit of a fund or prospect for the University. In fact, rather than a call for support for a fund that could benefit the University and something in the student's honour, the post said, "In lieu of flowers, the Rigg family would encourage donations to The Brain Tumour Foundation, braintumour.ca/mackenzie-rigg". This could also have been an opportunity to collect data for future work and discussions that would support this community in the longer term, rather than only allowing a point of contact on this one post.

Generally, as mentioned earlier, data becomes critically important to fundraising success, both in understanding a potential donor's contact information, but also understanding what is important to them. Although the work presented here discusses best practices on student and campus life, as well as building community when on campus with teams, clubs and groups, it is possible that there are other outliers that may motivate someone to give. These examples become an opportunity to work on reciprocity as defined by Wellman (1999), as well as improve relationships as suggested by Benkler (2006) and increasing the networks outlined by Lin (2002) and Ang (2011).

The outliers provided are emotional and can inspire people in a way that most university communications cannot. To then not create special funds or initiatives to honour both the people that have passed and to provide a further connection point to the institution seems like a missed opportunity for both data and support. It is possible for a university to honor the person that has passed away, while also achieving this organizational goal, and without a strategy in place to manage this most institutions are not able to fulfill that potential.

Outliers – Paid Content

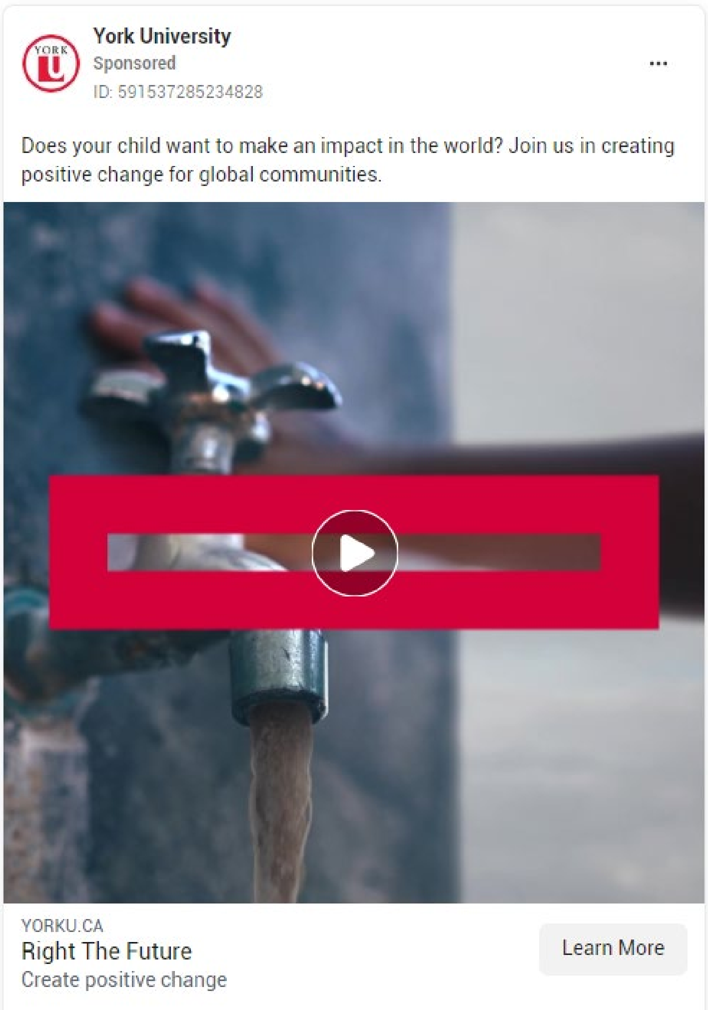

Figure 53: York University Outlier Example

It is important to note that there is only one outlier within this paid content review for all accounts. York University spent over $15,000 on an advertisement campaign centred around student recruitment. One example is shown to the left, and within this campaign there were 5 different images used, but all within the same theme. This indicates a significantly larger spend on advertising than any other example, and in turn, the impressions are significantly higher, with over one million impressions total from the entire ad campaign. This campaign ran from Dec 8, 2021 and March 19, 2022, with a focus on only those in Ontario of an older demographic to match with those who would potentially have children of age to attend University, during a time when the university admissions process is critical (Meta Library, 2023).

Outliers – Name Changes and New Buildings

Within the time frame of this study, Toronto Metropolitan University (@TorontoMET) changed their name from Ryerson University. This was marked by a piece of content with a popularity score of 2319. This marks the fourth most engaging piece of content throughout the entire study; however, it seems to be an overall missed opportunity by the institution. The piece of content below was posted by the central university account on April 26, 2022.

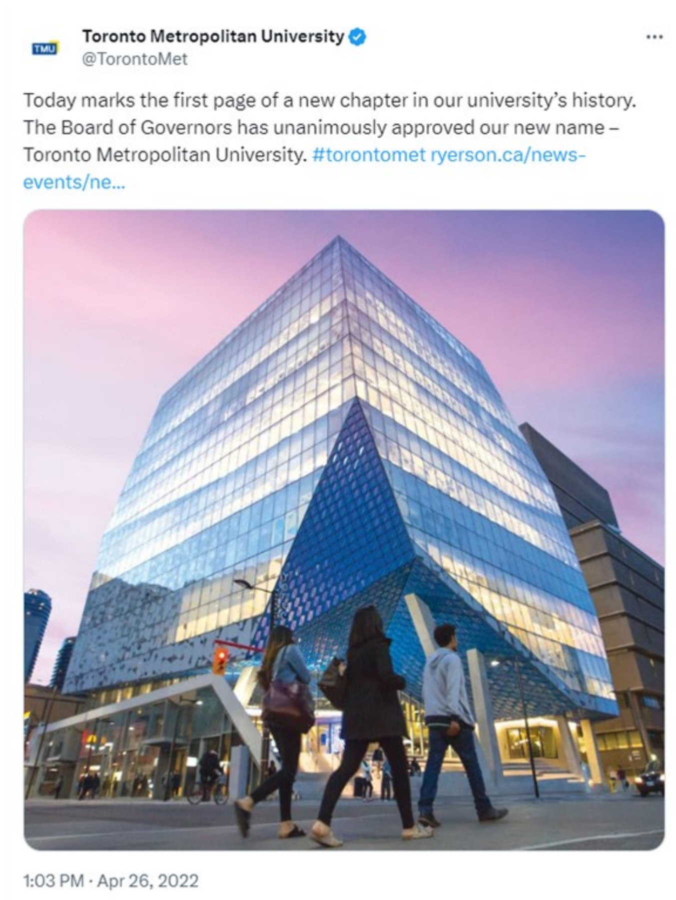

Figure 54: TMU Institutional Decision-Making

This piece of content on X did have a relatively high number of quoted X posts overall, with 488, however, the sentiment score remained neutral and lower than one might hope with such a significant and rare announcement for an institution.

There is then a further piece of content shared on X that day by the central communications account that states:

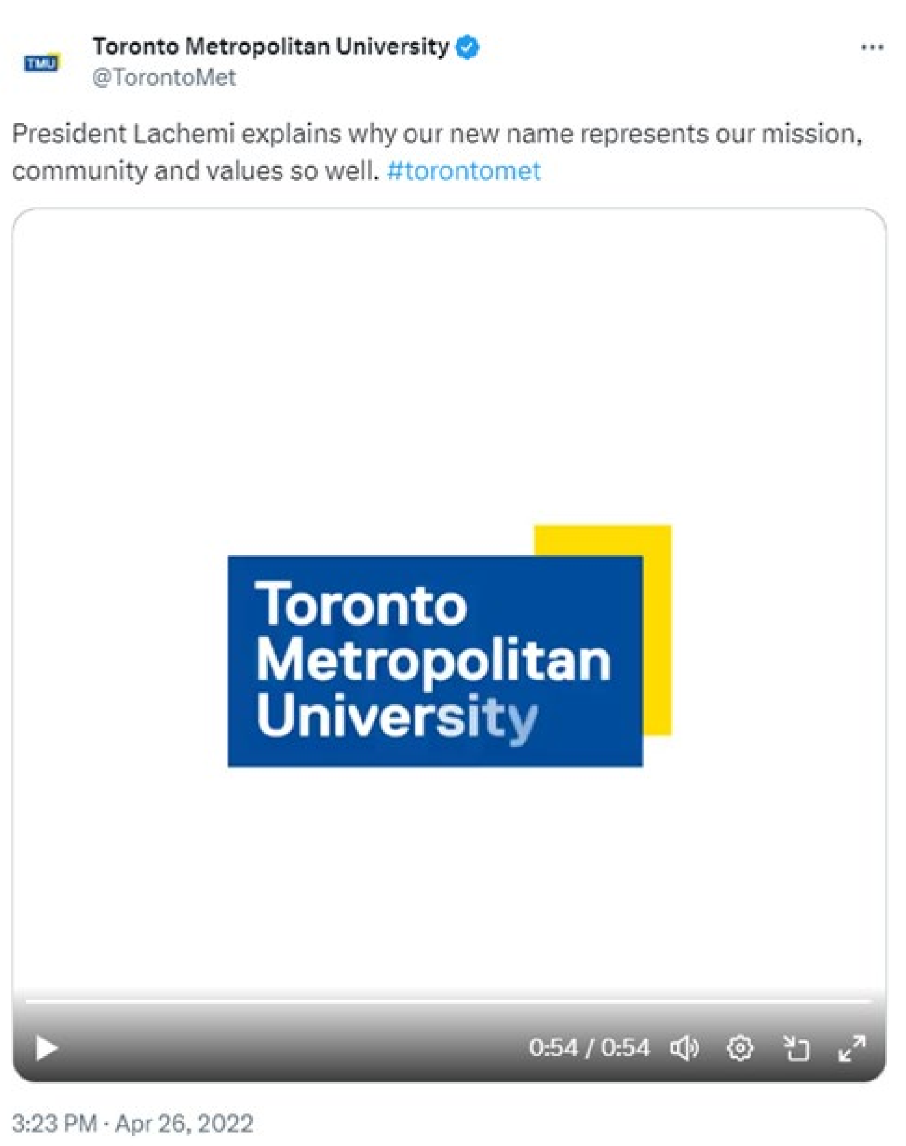

Figure 55: TMU Outlier Example Video

This piece of content scored 373 on popularity, and a neutral sentiment response.

If, social media participants are likely to desire informativeness and entertainment as suggested in work by Luo (2002), it seems possible that in this instance users would have favoured entertainment. This doesn't mean however that there was not an opportunity to build a relationship and brand. Rather, to continue a traditional brand voice on such a widely covered topic in the news, social content from other organizations and mentions on the potential for the name change and why it was being done, the institution could have created more engaging and entertaining ways to connect.

Alternatively, other work by Braham (1987), found that it is possible that a name change, or logo change, can impact loyalty to a brand, and even the perceived prestige. This type of change can impact mentor relationships, organizational satisfaction within an organization, and make alumni feel disconnected to the institution (DeMeuse, 1987).

TMU had a unique opportunity to create a dynamic strategy and long-term relationship value by engaging with alumni of the then Ryerson University, to build excitement for the potential change and activate an engaged community around the new name for the announcement. Instead, the announcement, which is rare and unique in its content type, became a rather mundane post overall, and missed a real way to connect with an audience that was very engaged in the discussion and ultimately the decision by the institution, and likely resulted in the type of findings from Braham (1976) and DeMeuse (1987).

Another significant outlier, but one that generally has a close relationship with fundraising and donations in order to be completed, would be the creation of a new building, or changing a space on campus. The University of Waterloo experienced this type of event at the start of the semester, in the fall of 2021. As a result, all of their accounts shared various pieces of content in relation to the grand opening, including the following most successful posts by the University of Waterloo Athletics account (@WlooWarriors), with a popularity score of 1565:

Figure 56: University of Waterloo Outlier Example

It should be noted that within this specific example, the University of Waterloo also has a student focused account that is run by their student services team called UWaterloo Life (@UWaterloolife), which also shared content around the opening of the new building on campus. Additionally, the central account for the University of Waterloo

(@UWaterloo) account shared several posts about the new building, including the following post with a popularity score of 5625:

Figure 57: University of Waterloo Outlier Example 2

Most interesting, is that out of the content posted around this topic, which includes other posts from Athletics and Central about the building, the Alumni office did not share any content related to it, which I believe demonstrates a missed opportunity. This seems to not align with their overall communication strategy either, which does show a unique giving page for donating to Athletics, a robust group of stories around alumni and donating to athletics, and even a 2018 Case for Support (Waterloo Warriors, 2018) requesting donations from alumni and the community to the proposed facility.

In comparison the University of Guelph Athletics example earlier with their new athletics facility and opportunities to name not only the building but items within the building, and then creating an entire communications strategy to share any donations as the University of Guelph has done, the University of Waterloo seemed to have not leveraged their donations and community support in their social media posts and digital strategy.

It would then seem that it would have been a great opportunity to share content about the opening of the new facility and thank those who donated to the facility, as shown in the earlier Guelph examples. This overall would indicate a missed opportunity for communications strategy to compliment the fundraising work, but also to acknowledge donors so that there is a potential for future gifts, as would be best practice.

Implications for the Field of Fundraising

As discussed earlier in the outlier example, there are very few pieces of content overall that relate to fundraising. If an institution relies so heavily on fundraising overall, and more so as the funding dynamics change, it seems important that content include a more significant strategy towards this as a business function. The work of O’Neil (2007) and Waters (2009) includes the importance of relationship cultivation and proves that changing the stewardship strategies to impact overall happiness with an association (O’Neil, 2007). The relationships for potential fundraising success take a longer time to form as I reviewed earlier, so to work at those relationships in a strategy across the university platforms would be required for any real fundraising success, similar to the work of Mael and Ashforth (1992).

Each of the institutions reviewed in this research, and others across the country have made investments in database technology that allows them to track a wide variety of data and touch points with individual alumni and donors (Bakioglu, et al., 2011). Development and advancement professionals from across the institution have access to this technology and are tasked with identifying and assessing the alumni and non-alumni who can provide philanthropic support for the university using this tool (Weir & Hibbert, 2000).

The challenge appears to be that this database technology becomes very one-dimensional in the collection of data to understand relationships with alumni. Institutions appear to not have a real understanding of what social media channels alumni are on, how they are interacting with their institutions on these channels, and ultimately don't have a larger aggregate available to understand how to utilize the potential for this social capital with their constituents. It seems to show that there is a missed opportunity in using these tools to build strong and lasting relationships with customers, as discussed earlier by (Algesheimer, et al., 2005).

These scoring software systems represent a clear example of Akrich's (1992) technical object in which, "technical objects thus simultaneously embody and measure a set of relations" (p. 205). Designers, therefore, are configuring the algorithm as a result of the business goals and needs (in this case donations), so it is logical to assume their work "reveal the negotiations between actors as they imagine the attributes of potential users, and to analyze how the determinations of these negotiations are expressed in a technical form" (Couture, 2017, p. 1117). The values placed in the datasets and those weighted more considerably in the algorithm, are then the clear result of the negotiation Couture (2017) indicates, but missing in the data is the fundamental element of what happens online and with the digital communities being created. We see this as an example in practice with the beloved professor that passed away at Concordia, and the missed opportunity to capture the data of those that felt a connection to the story, and the impact with the institution.

It is important then to consider this negotiation within the framework of Value Sensitive Design, where the design of technology is done while accounting for human values "in a principled and comprehensive manner throughout the design process" (Friedman, et al., 2008). If not approached this way, there is potential for these algorithms to in fact produce and shape the reality it aims to measure by focusing on objects, methods and understandings (Boyd & Crawford, 2012; Cheney-Lippold, 2017). Value Sensitive Design researchers have indicated that these systems can have the potential to produce discriminatory outcomes, as the data could be altered, taken out of context or repurposed (Crawford, 2013), and as I believe, will miss entirely the value of the communications and digital communities formed, as represented here with work done by athletics for example.

If institutions could improve this consideration for their data tools and could collect the data on individuals that are engaging with them on social media, they may have a better opportunity to track relationships and understand social capital overtime.

This could be considered an opportunity for future research, as allowing identifiers could allow for message testing overtime as a mark to improve relationships or potential donations. This would also allow research to better indicate how donors and non-donors may change their views of the institution, and how to create a stronger message and communications strategy to activate certain individuals or smaller communities with higher social capital.

For example, if universities could track the individuals who have engaged with their posts on topics and use that data overtime to sort those individuals into groups that would receive certain solicitations for donations that would match the patterns of their interests, then I believe they would have a greater likelihood of fundraising success. This would be a significant opportunity for future research and data design and would be beneficial for institutions moving forward.

All these technologies, both database and digital communications channels not only miss consideration for the relationships formed digitally, but they also exclude younger demographics as valuable in the dataset, as this becomes the primary way many are interacting, but they are not recorded and scored based on those interactions. Combined, it means that younger generations are not considered in not-for-profit strategy, and therefore become a missed group for relationship growth and donation potential years from graduation. These database technologies, as Latour (1992) explains, play an important role in mediating human relationships, so should therefore be reviewed more thoroughly to consider groups that may be excluded, particularly in the case of data for fundraising success. These "producers, machines, and users demonstrate how certain values and political goals can be achieved through the construction and employment of technologies" (Latour, 1992, p. 151). This becomes important because without the particular considerations reviewed in this dissertation, although the individual may not experience harm, the long-term financial health of the organization could be impacted by data missed and values not being captured in data design.

By systematically excluding younger generations, not-for-profits are limiting the growth and the long-term financial revenue from these segments. As Dencik et al. (2018) explain, these systems don't account for the complexities of individuals, and how they transition in their financial position over time, making longer term relationship building and fundraising more difficult. Not-for-profits should consider more complex factors in their design values, like the relationship measurements suggested by Hon and Grunig (1999), as well as McAlexander, Koenig and DuFault (2014). By excluding considerations of these factors, they are placing too much emphasis on values that only contribute to the health of the organization today, and not the longer implications of growth and relationship building, which may be contributing to the declining donation numbers discussed at the start of this work.

Implications in Communications

Overall, it seems that like the work of Sheehan and Morrison (2009), communications professionals at each of the institutions studied struggle to find the right balance and creative space to create community, build a brand and engage with their audience in an effective way. It becomes difficult for an institution to find the success that Voorveld, et al. (2010) discuss, where having the same message from multiple sources and channels can improve credibility and confidence in the brand. The strategy reviewed here by each institution appears to be disjointed and lacks consistency in message. I don't believe that this challenge is only central to the institutions studied, and I believe that this becomes a larger challenge overall that needs to be reviewed for success for institutions in the longer term.

From an organizational resource perspective, there is not a shortage of employees or a lack of skilled professionals within these departments, but it appears that the size of the organizations and the varied audiences that they are trying to connect with, can at times create a social media strategy that appears disjointed and disconnected from the audience needs and interests. As mentioned earlier in the findings, there are institutions that are posting at a lower frequency than others, but their popularity isn't not significantly impacted. This can mean that both they have a dedicated fan base that will consistently engage and share in their posts overall, or, and I believe to be more likely, they have a better understanding of the content that will receive higher engagement.

Outside of these small outliers of success as discussed earlier, many institutions seem to be posting as frequently as possible, with little consideration for the content that may interest their audience. This mirrors findings from Wilson et al., (2011) who identified a trend where for many organizations, social media efforts can often be experimental and somewhat of a free for all, with rare success to a desired outcome. Perhaps than, it is as simple that an effort to please everyone becomes a strategy that pleases no one. We see this example of a free for all in the research reviewed in this dissertation, as many institutions are posting content, posting consistently, but overall seem to lack a strategy and an understanding of what might be working for their audience.

The findings show that athletics, winning teams, and building a sense of community (in this study clearly done well by the smaller institutions) become the greatest likelihood for success, so it would be fair to suggest that become the strategic focus moving forward. The same should be true for any of the accounts, not just athletics, and universities should work to ensure there is a cohesive brand around their community and what their institution represents. This will allow each audience to feel connected to their institution in a way that is meaningful for them, as well as fostering a longer-term relationship with a hope that alumni will donate and get involved well after they have graduated. By seeing this as the strategic focus, and not just a space to post any type of content with no strategy, as explained by Wilson et al., (2011), universities will be more likely to find success.

If, as Rheingold (2000) discusses, community is a human's primary source of support, and that they need to be meaningful and effective as Benkler (2006) finds, then universities overall need to do a better job at building community for both the students on campus, but then continuing that relationship through their online communities once those students leave. The descriptive data reviewed in this work indicates that those with the smaller community overall, have a greater likelihood of building relationship and trust with their students and alumni, and that in turn, those relationships demonstrate a stronger engagement on social media, similar to the work presented earlier by Benkler (2006), Wellman (2001), Rheingold (2000) and others.

The student-alumni relationship is a critical piece to institutional success, and therefore the relationships online that institutions have with these groups is equally important. If these audiences are cultivated and cared for, universities will be able to leverage the relationships to spread information across networks, expand on peer-to-peer relationship values as shared by Kerr, et al. (2012), Porter and Golan (2006), Trusov, et al. (2009), and ultimately improve the student and alumni experience through donations of time, talent and treasure from those who participate in the university community.

Additionally, as discussed earlier, many fundraising organizations put a great deal of weight in their strategy to the scoring available in their database systems, often of more superficial factors for the calculation of value for their potential donor. However, as this study shows, there should be a great deal more consideration for measuring the relationships that each institution has with their donors and potential donors. One that I would believe only a communications perspective allows, compared to an analytical business perspective.

For one example, The Vice President and Academic Provost at the University of Waterloo shared in November 2023 that they were expecting a $15-million-dollar operating budget deficit for the end of their fiscal year (Rush, 2023). By the end of 2027, they believe that it will grow to be over $100-million- dollars without any major changes to the financial support and funding plans. Similarly, Queen’s University announced a deficit of $63 million dollars, Wilfrid Laurier announced a projected deficit of $11-million, and the University of Guelph has in fact experienced deficits every year since 2020. Within the entire sector leaders at institutions are asking the provincial and federal governments to eliminate operating funding freezes and change the funding models, but with each level of government facing their own challenges, there is little projected to change soon.

Queen's University as an example, recently announced that they will need to cut millions of dollars from their arts programs and have indicated they are freezing all new hires and even suggested that they were unsure of the survival of the institution overall if there are not significant changes to the funding they receive (Muhammad-Yusuf, 2023, November 28). There are a number of other institutions that are feeling similar financial constraints and budget shortfalls, and the higher education landscape in Canada, and around the World continues to change. Within the Canadian context this includes:

a) There has been a reliance and funding structure that supported taking a larger number of international students, as the tuition for international students can be three and four times as high as domestic students for the same program. This has allowed institutions to take in additional funding through a growing group of international students in the last five years, but policy and structural changes to this element are continuing to change and feel more constraints and rules. This includes requirements for housing any international students, limitations on the number of students permitted by province, and requirements to connect the program taken with likelihood for employment at graduation.

b) In an environment where salaries have increased, the cost of operations, infrastructure has increased, and the overall economic environment has changed, many institutions are facing continuing budget shortfalls that year over year, could mean institutions not being able to remain open. Using the Laurentian University example, it is not impossible to see a university in Canada (or elsewhere), need to declare bankruptcy.

c) Many Provincial governments have put a freeze on tuition, meaning any institution could not raise their tuition cost for domestic students, and in the case of Ontario, they were frozen to the levels maintained in 2019, despite the consideration for rising costs. This has contributed to the increased intake of international students mentioned earlier, where the tuition is not required to stay at those lower levels.

d) Finally, the landscape is changing overall. There is a new interest in hybrid learning, or online options, which will mean that many institutions will not only need to find new ways to increase revenues and to repurpose the existing infrastructure, but they will also lose the opportunity to build connection and community on a physical campus as discussed here. This will mean institutions needing to adapt in a variety of ways, as students may not spend as long on campus creating awareness of a physical environment.

It is still critically important for institutions to be supported financially by their government, both provincially and federally in Canada, but thus far that seems to not be an immediate consideration. This means that in the interim, institutions need to be able to try and close the financial gap with the resources and community that they have available to them right now, suggesting that the work of fundraising and communications become critical to the success of the institution, and a solution that could be a great compliment to an improvement in government funding. This reaffirms the work of Gallo (2013) and others, while also emphasizing the importance of working through these financial challenges to ensure the educational knowledge and therefore, overall health of a community and country moving forward.

This work overall, and the previous research findings within this dissertation shows that fundraising professionals need to work in partnership with their communications colleagues to analyze what values are currently considered in the database and scoring system design, and in turn, what importance the organization places on those values in the strategy and communications work moving forward. These two considerations should be considered equally in a strategy for each organization, allowing a deeper relationship and connection with students, alumni and members of the greater community.

If universities worked to build community more, as found in the examples of Brock University and the University of Guelph's athletics audiences, than I believe that they would have a greater likelihood of success. This is not to say that universities need to put a sole focus on athletics, I do believe that each institution has important cultural pieces to their community that sets them apart, but by then building on those elements as students, they must continue that work for alumni and those well after their time on campus. This may mean for some institutions that there are multiple elements to the culture that keep students and alumni connected, but by tracking those interests with data and understanding groups, the university will be able to better design their communications and fundraising strategy.

Using social media and digital communities to facilitate this feeling and relationship will prove to have a greater likelihood for fundraising success in the long term, as students and alumni feel compelled and motivate to share, engage and deepen their relationship with the institution that they will feel connected to. These social interactions in a digital space, can allow for a technological intervention to connect users across spaces, as found in the work by Dobson and Knezevic (2018), which can now be applied to the opportunity that exists in bridging community and relationship for universities well students have left a physical campus.

Conclusion

Overall, this work finds that there are five considerations for best practice, to leverage social capital in fundraising and social media engagement, or what I will refer to as the five ways elements to creating a social relationship for fundraising success. This model, as I propose it, follows similar theories to the outlines of the fundraising funnel, discussed earlier, but also commonly used marketing funnels. Within each element it is important to continue to build and develop relationships and points of connection with alumni, students and members of a community in order to achieve ultimate fundraising success.

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1. **Winning Teams**: Institutions overall appear to not be utilizing the power of social media to share not only team wins and successes, but to also share updates on the season through their various channels. It is clear, not only in the previous text discussed, but further supported in this work, that winning teams and the successes of the alumni and students are high engagement points for the social community and should be consistently shared across all channels. Using all these platforms will allow institutions to connect with a broader audience, sharing your success stories and creating a sense of belonging within your community.

2. **Nostalgia and Memorial**: By engaging in your community and their activities and acknowledging the more personal connections and emotional moments that might engage them, institutions create a space for students and alumni to see them as a key member to their community. By creating opportunity for nostalgia or acknowledging key life moments that have impacted a community, or a subsection to a community, and institution is able to strengthen their presence and credibility with the audience. This is proven in this research around the memorial posts related to key professors and students that passed away, and the way that the community engaged with the content. Attention to this area will overall enhance an institution's social capital, creating a two-way relationship with your donors and potential donors.

3. **Institutional Decision-Making**: As an organization, focus your strategy on building genuine relationships and connections with individuals in your community. By engaging in active listening, opening the organization to feedback and discussion, and demonstrating interest and understanding in the topics that matter to your audience, you will foster a long-term relationship with potential for greater financial success. One example of this from this study was the work done by TMU, and the missed opportunity to engage their community in the institutional decision-making around the name change as discussed earlier.

4. **Ambassadors**: Any organization should do the work to ensure that they are not the only voice, this shared opportunity to connect with others who align with your cause will significantly boost an organization's visibility, credibility and ultimately their social capital overall. This is noted in the examples provided in this work, in particular for those alumni that were participating in more significant events, like the Olympics or winning World-class awards, that shared a message tagging the institution, or that the institution then shared, like in the Team Gushue example from Memorial University.

5. **Data**: None of the earlier work moves fundraising forward without the contribution of data to the management system that each institution is working within. As discussed earlier, these digital communities become the only way that some alumni will engage with their institution, and even more true for the younger generations. The ability then, to capture data with how alumni and students are engaging online, and what topics, funds or events may be important to them is the only way to create personalized and meaningful giving opportunities in the future.

By ensuring that you are putting stewardship as a central part to your organization's strategy you are showing appreciation to donors and maintaining open lines of communication with your audience. Keeping these supporters engaged even after a campaign ends or a donation is made will help sustain relationships for any future work.

Social capital and relationships in fundraising play a transformative role, as it enriches any campaign with trust, authenticity, and community engagement. By prioritizing a more sincere relationship over a social strategy of posting content, organizations, and specifically higher education institutions looked at through this work, will be able to cultivate relationships, engage in community, leverage technology and successfully harness the full power of social capital to achieve fundraising success.

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