

Branding and Posting Strategy on Facebook Pages of Higher Education Institutions in Ontario, Canada in 2019-2020: A Quantitative and Qualitative Investigation

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Abstract : Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ontario, Canada have invested in social media presence for multiple purposes, such as branding, student' engagement, and recruitment. To have a full picture of the social media strategy implemented by HEIs in Ontario, Canada, this study used a mixed-method approach to analyze Facebook posts' characteristics and content. A total of 1789 Facebook posts from September 2019 to April 2020 of six selected HEIs were collected for analysis and coding based on five pre-determined branding positions: Elite, Nurturing, Campus, Outcome, and Commodity. Besides, the study also calculated the engagement rate for each social media practice to measure its effectiveness. The results show that there were not many differences in practices such as posting frequency, length, types, and timing among HEIs. However, the distribution of branding positions and content targeting future students versus current students was varied, although the HEIs employed all five branding positions and targeted the same lists of audiences. Some practices such as evening post for colleges and nurturing branding for universities attracted significantly higher engagement. This study provides a review of current social media practices and branding strategy, as well as informs the practices that can better engage the audiences.

Keywords : branding, higher education, social media, student engagement, student recruitment

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