**MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY**

**Ph.D. in Administration & Leadership**

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND E-MARKETING PRACTICES IN GRADUATE STUDENT RECRUITMENT: AN INVESTIGATION OF GRADUATE ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

by

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Table of Contents

[Chapter One 4](#_Toc531259978)

[**Introduction** 4](#_Toc531259979)

[**Theoretical Framework** 6](#_Toc531259980)

[Integrated Interdependence Model of Graduate Enrollment Management 6](#_Toc531259981)

[Social Media Theory 7](#_Toc531259982)

[**Conceptual Framework** 10](#_Toc531259983)

[**Purpose of the Study** 11](#_Toc531259984)

[**Research Question** 11](#_Toc531259985)

[**Sub-Problems** 12](#_Toc531259986)

[**Hypothesis Relationships** 12](#_Toc531259987)

[**Definitions** 13](#_Toc531259988)

[**Delimitations of the Study** 15](#_Toc531259989)

[**Assumptions** 15](#_Toc531259990)

[**Significance of the Study** 16](#_Toc531259991)

[Chapter Two 17](#_Toc531259992)

[Higher Education Recruitment 17](#_Toc531259993)

[**What is Enrollment Management?** 17](#_Toc531259994)

[**The Enrollment Management Team** 19](#_Toc531259995)

[**The Enrollment Management Team- University Admissions** 21](#_Toc531259996)

[**The Student Recruitment Process** 22](#_Toc531259997)

[**What is Graduate Enrollment Management?** 24](#_Toc531259998)

[**The Enrollment Management Team- Graduate Admissions** 27](#_Toc531259999)

[Social Media 28](#_Toc531260000)

[**What is Social Media?** 28](#_Toc531260001)

[**Various Modes and Uses of Social Media** 30](#_Toc531260002)

[**The Use of Social Media in Higher Education Recruitment** 33](#_Toc531260003)

[E-Marketing 36](#_Toc531260004)

[**E-Marketing: What is it and How is it Used?** 36](#_Toc531260005)

[**The Use of E-Marketing in Higher Education Recruiting** 37](#_Toc531260006)

[Chapter Three 41](#_Toc531260007)

[**Research Design** 41](#_Toc531260008)

[**Sample** 42](#_Toc531260009)

[**Instruments** 43](#_Toc531260010)

[**Procedure** 44](#_Toc531260011)

[**Data Analysis** 44](#_Toc531260012)

[Chapter Four 46](#_Toc531260013)

[**Response Rate** 46](#_Toc531260014)

[**Demographic Information** 47](#_Toc531260015)

[**Subproblem 1** 52](#_Toc531260016)

[**Subproblem 2** 54](#_Toc531260017)

[**Subproblem 3** 58](#_Toc531260018)

[**Subproblem 4** 59](#_Toc531260019)

[**Subproblem 5** 61](#_Toc531260020)

[**Subproblem 6** 63](#_Toc531260021)

[**Supplemental Analysis** 66](#_Toc531260022)

[Chapter Five 70](#_Toc531260023)

[Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations 70](#_Toc531260024)

[**Discussion** 71](#_Toc531260025)

[**Limitations of the Study** 79](#_Toc531260026)

[**Implications** 79](#_Toc531260027)

[**Future Research** 82](#_Toc531260028)

[**Conclusion** 83](#_Toc531260029)

[References 85](#_Toc531260030)

[Appendix A: Survey Instrument 93](#_Toc531260031)

[Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire 101](#_Toc531260032)

[Appendix C: Informed Consent Form 103](#_Toc531260033)

# Chapter One

The Problem and Its Setting

## **Introduction**

Social media is a constant, perhaps even a mainstay, in the everyday lives of many individuals across the world. On a daily basis, millions of people Tweet out their day, hashtag (#) their photos and posts on Facebook, and Instagram what culinary masterpiece they crafted for last night’s dinner. Social media allows us to reach the world at the press of a button held in the palm of our hand. Higher education enrollment has been on the rise since 2001. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that undergraduate enrollment has increased 24% between 2001-2015 and is projected to continue so by 14% until 2026 (Hussar and Bailey, 2018). Additionally, the number of conferred graduate degrees, both Masters and professional degrees, have increased 56% and 49% respectively between 2001 and 2015 (Hussar and Bailey, 2018) Masters degree enrollment is expected to increase 22% and professional degree enrollment is expected to increase by 13% until 2026. With only a 14% expected growth in undergraduate enrollment, colleges and universities in the United States need to shift their focus to recruiting graduate students to create and sustain a thriving student population.

Graduate enrollment often takes a “back seat” to undergraduate enrollment. Since undergraduate enrollment represents a majority of enrolled students at colleges and universities in the United States, a greater emphasis, usually complemented with greater resources, is placed on recruiting this population. A majority of the existing literature surrounding enrollment management is centered on undergraduate students as they constitute the largest population source for college enrollment (Reuben, 2008; Stegmier, 2015; Greenwood, 2012). Hussar and Bailey (2018) noted earlier that the exponential growth in graduate and professional students until 2026 lends a unique opportunity for colleges and universities to target a large population in need of graduate education. Colleges and universities are always looking for new, creative ways to recruit graduate students. With the plethora of higher education institutions within the United States that offer graduate and professional degree programs, these colleges and universities must “stand out from the crowd” by utilizing unique marketing practices in order to target and recruit a fruitful graduate student population.

This research study lends itself to fill a major gap in the existing higher education literature, specifically graduate student recruitment. It will help colleges and universities identify their strengths and weaknesses in graduate student marketing and aid in establishing industry best practices as they relate to marketing initiatives for graduate and professional students. The results of this study will show colleges and universities what practices and resources are being used for graduate student marketing, identify new modes of marketing to this specific population, and the overall importance of social media and e-marketing practices in a strategic graduate enrollment management plan. This research aims to study the use of social media and e-marketing practices on recruiting graduate students. There is research published on the use of social media and e-marketing practices on undergraduate student recruitment (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### Integrated Interdependence Model of Graduate Enrollment Management

The theoretical frameworks used for this study are the Integrated Interdependence Model of Graduate Enrollment Management (Connor, LaFave, and Balayan, 2017) and Social Media Theory (Gangadharbatia, 2012).

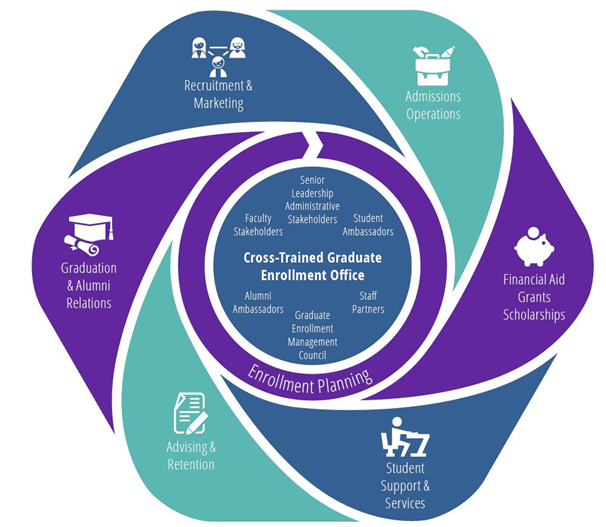


Figure I: Integrated Interdependence Model of Graduate Enrollment Management, Connor, LaFave, & Balayan (2017)

This model highlights the integration of various offices on campus into enrollment planning. Each office listed in the Integrated Interdependence Model is affected, in some way, by student enrollment. Based on the number of students enrolled in a recruiting cycle, these offices may need to adjust operations in order to meet student needs, such as changes in budget allocations and increases in staff members within their division. For example, if the Graduate Admissions Office recruits an additional 20% of students from the previous year, the Retention and Advising Office needs to assess the number of advisees each professional staff member will be responsible for. This would then, in turn, result in Student Support & Services offices increasing the availability of support resources for students, such as tutoring services and career services.

Within this model, employees from different departments are cross-trained among another so they are best equipped to address student issues in order to guide them to the proper department or person needed. One main reason for cross-training professional staff is to provide the best student experience possible. The more availability and accessibility of professional staff members dedicated towards student support will result in higher student retention and satisfaction rates (Tinto, 2006). Additionally, cross-trained professional staff, faculty, and administration can also highlight the different aspects of the university when speaking to prospective students, thus arming them with the content knowledge to address many common questions that prospective graduate students have. Compared to the saying “it takes a village to raise a child”, it certainly takes a campus to recruit graduate students as enrollment is a campus-wide initiative.

### Social Media Theory

While social media use and popularity has grown exponentially over the past decade, researchers and marketing professionals alike are trying to gain a deeper understanding of social media and its various functions. One way to gain a deeper understanding of this new technology is through examining social media theory. According to Gangadharbatia (2012), social media theory examines the content, delivery, and interaction of information with consumers and its effects on advertising. The content delivered to consumers across a broad spectrum of social media modes should be informative, highlight brand awareness, and spark a conversation with the customer and other consumers within the market. Additionally, Gangadharbatia (2012) states that engagement with consumers on social media is more than just a conversation. Companies need to identify who, how, and where on social media information, content, and conversations are happening so they can better identify and quantify their return on investment (ROI).

JC Social Media (2018) states that social media theory is constructed of three main components: self-promotional, value-adding, and interaction. The organization’s goal is to show the benefits of the product/service (i.e. value-add) through engaging in a conversation with consumers online to gain their attention, create brand awareness, and build a positive relationship with consumers (JC Social Media, 2018). Below is the Social Media Content Matrix developed by JC Social Media (2018):

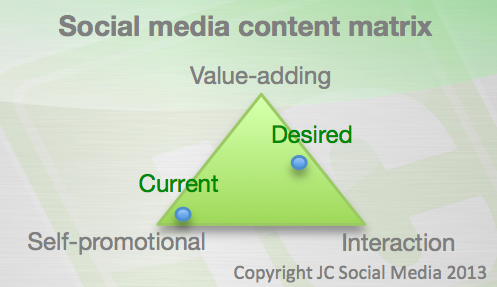


Figure II: Social Media Content Matrix, JC Social Media (2018)

The matrix shows the three main components of social media theory and where organizations should focus their content delivery. In the above matrix, it is shown that most organizations generate social media content that focuses purely on self-promotion. While creating brand awareness is an important component with the marketing strategy of any organization, companies should shift their social media content to engage in conversations with consumers to show the value-add of the product/service as a way to promote brand awareness, thus enhancing their social media marketing strategy. To further articulate integrating social media theory into the organization’s overall content strategy, JC Social Media (2018) developed the Social Media Strategy Development diagram:

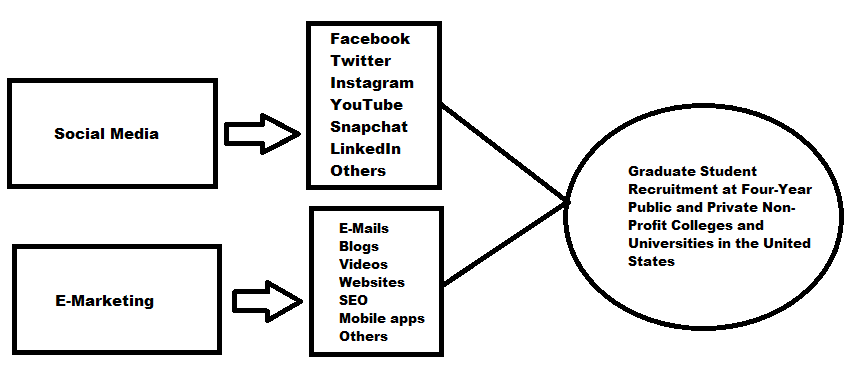


Figure III: Social Media Strategy Development, JC Social Media (2018)

This diagram shows how social media can be integrated into the overall content strategy of the organization. Each circle represents audience, brand, and goals respectively. The “hit list creation” between goals and audience represents identifying the target audience (i.e. consumers) the organization wants to market its products/services to. The interaction strategy between brand and goals represents developing ways to market the brand and products/services through a variety of social media modes. Finally, between brand and audience is value adding content, which represents the content and information delivered to consumers that shows the positive impact that products/services available will have on consumers. While all of these components are equally important in their own way, they can be triangulated into the development of the overall content strategy, which identifies how the organization will achieve results through social media strategy development.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The researcher has constructed a conceptual framework that examines the factors of social media and e-marketing practices within the Recruitment and Marketing section of the Integrated Interdependence Model of Graduate Enrollment Management.



This research will examine the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States. Each variable, social media and e-marketing, encompasses different modes of communication with prospective graduate students. Within social media, the researcher will examine various social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat, and how they are used in the graduate student recruitment process. Additionally, the researcher will look at various e-marketing practices and their use in the graduate student recruitment process. Examples of e-marketing practices include e-mails, blogs, videos, websites, search engine optimization (SEO), and mobile applications. Each variable will have specific nuances as to how they fit and are used in the Recruitment and Marketing section of the strategic graduate enrollment management plan.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the use of social media and e-marketing practices in the graduate enrollment process at four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States. A survey was sent to graduate enrollment management administrators to identify the social media and e-marketing practices used at their respective institutions. The researcher then compared the use of social media and e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States to determine if differences existed. The dependent variables for this study were social media and e-marketing practices. Social media is defined as a digital form of communication networks available to individuals worldwide. E-marketing practices can be defined as digital communications created and disseminated to a specific target audience with the intent on delivering specific information to further engage their interests. The independent variables were public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States, which are defined as post-secondary institutions that offer graduate and professional programs to graduate students.

## **Research Question**

What relationships exist in social media and e-marketing practices used in the recruitment of graduate students at four-year public versus private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?

## **Sub-Problems**

There are six sub-problems this study will address. Each sub-problem addresses social media and e-marketing practices respectively. The sub-problems of this study are:

1. What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
2. What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
3. What relationships exist in social media practices between public versus private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
4. What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
5. What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
6. What relationships exist in e-marketing practices between public versus private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?

## **Hypothesis Relationships**

The hypotheses for this study are:

H01= Relationships do not exist among social media practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Ha1= Relationships exist among social media practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

H02= Relationships do not exist among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Ha2= Relationships exist among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

## **Definitions**

1. Enrollment management (EM)- a field of higher education that focuses on the enrollment and retention efforts of students. Common divisions/offices within enrollment management include Admissions, Financial Aid, Academic Advising, Career Services, Bursar, and Registrar (Hossler, 1984). For the purposes of this research, enrollment management will be defined as all institutional operations pertaining to the enrollment and retention of students.
2. Graduate Enrollment Management (GEM) - a field within enrollment management that focuses on graduate and professional students which aims to serve graduate student recruitment and marketing, overall graduate admissions operations, graduate student support services, and graduate student advising and retention (NAGAP, 2017). For the purposes of this research, GEM will be defined as all institutional operations that focus on the enrollment and retention of graduate students.
3. Graduate student- a student who is pursuing a graduate or professional degree at a college or university (Connor, LaFave, & Balayan, 2017). For the purposes of this research, a graduate student is defined as any student enrolled into a graduate or professional degree program.
4. Graduate program- a Masters-level (or equivalent) degree that is pursued by a student who already possesses a baccalaureate degree. Common examples of this would be a Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MS), Master of Education (MEd.), etc. (Williams, 2008). For the purposes of this research, a graduate program is defined as a Master’s degree program.
5. Professional program- a degree pursued by a student that is the highest degree possible within that specific field of study. Common examples of this would be a Medical Doctor (MD), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D), Doctor of Education (Ed.D), Juris Doctorate (JD), etc. (Hussar and Bailey, 2018). For the purposes of this research, a professional program will be defined any doctoral or terminal degree program.
6. Graduate enrollment management plan- a strategic plan that focuses on the overall strategy to effectively recruit graduate and professional students; can include enrollment goals and marketing plans; usually created by administrators and staff within the enrollment management division (Campbell and Smith, 2014). For the purposes of this research, graduate enrollment management plan will be defined as the institutional plan to recruit graduate students.
7. 4-Year College/University- an institution of higher learning; provides education to students above the high school level (Dixon, 1995). For the purposes of this research, a college/university will be defined as any public or private non-profit college or university that offers a minimum of a Master’s Degree.
8. Social media- a digital form of communication networks available to individuals worldwide; includes popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012). For the purposes of this research, social media will be defined as a digital platform used to communicate and share information with others.
9. E-marketing practices- digital communications created and disseminated to a specific target audience with the intent on delivering specific information to further engage their interests; can include websites, e-mails, web blogs, etc. (Coviello, Brodie, Brookes, & Palmer, 2003). For the purposes of this research, e-marketing will be defined as the use of e-mail, website, and other forms of technology and web-based applications to market the college/university to prospective students.
10. United States- this is defined as all 50 states that comprise the United States of America (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016). For the purposes of this research, the United States will be defined as all 50 states, excluding any territories.

## **Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to four year private and public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States that offer graduate and professional programs. The study was also delimited to graduate student recruitment. Lastly, the study was delimited to the members of a professional organization comprising of graduate enrollment management (GEM) professionals.

## **Assumptions**

The researcher identified an assumption to this research study. The researcher assumed that all respondents would answer openly, honestly, and independently to the survey. Failure to do so would have skewed the results of the study, thus affecting the generalizability of the results. The researcher also assumed that the respondents to the survey work in the field of graduate enrollment management. There may be some senior administrators, such as Vice-Presidents and Deans, which oversee a centralized enrollment management office that houses both undergraduate and graduate admissions. It is assumed by the researcher these specific administrators will respond to the survey in respect to their graduate enrollment management operations.

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to highlight the importance of social media and e-marketing techniques on recruiting graduate students at four year private and public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States. Much published research in the field of enrollment management focuses on undergraduate students as they comprise the overwhelming majority of higher education applicants. Even though undergraduate students comprise the majority of an institution’s student body, Hussar and Bailey (2016) point out that graduate and professional student enrollment is projected to increase a combined 55% until 2025. The significant increases in these demographics indicate a unique opportunity for colleges and universities to capture a larger segment of this growing market. The results from this study will signify the importance of recruiting graduate students using social media and e-marketing techniques in hopes of GEM professionals integrating such practices into their strategic enrollment management plans to generate and maintain a healthy graduate student population at their respective institutions. The researcher hopes this research will lay the foundation for further scholarly investigation into the field of graduate enrollment management as the graduate student population deserves the same dedicated resources and attention that undergraduate students receive.

# Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

As previously mentioned, there is a significant gap in the existing scholarly literature surrounding the topic of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment. This section of the study will explore an exhaustive review of associated scholarly literature pertaining to higher education recruiting, social media, and e-marketing practices. Higher education recruitment will be reviewed through defining and identifying enrollment management and recruiting, the student recruiting process, and graduate enrollment management and recruiting. Social media and e-marketing topics will be discussed in three sections- how the topic is defined by the literature, the various uses of each topic, and how each topic is used in higher education recruiting. Finally, this section will conclude by highlighting the triangular importance of each topic as they relate to the purpose of the study.

## Higher Education Recruitment

### **What is Enrollment Management?**

Enrollment management (EM) is a division within the college or university that is central to its success. According to Hossler (1984), enrollment management can be defined as:

“an organizational concept and systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over student enrollments. Organized by strategic planning and supported by institutional research, enrollment management activities concern student college choice, transition to college, student attrition and retention, and student outcomes” (p. 5).

Albeit admissions operations are central to the success of enrollment management, the focus of EM goes beyond the college admission process (Coomes, 2000). The true focus and scope of enrollment management covers the entire life of the student from point of admission to graduation. Enrollment management divisions conduct constant research to identify the target student market for sources of enrollment and allocate the appropriate resources to accomplish those goals.

According to Dixon (1995), there are four main goals of enrollment management: define the institution’s mission and goals, market these goals and mission to all parties, make tactical decisions regarding financial aid and scholarships to attract students, and appropriate adequate resources to achieve the overall goals of the organization. Bontrager (2004) identified strategic enrollment management (SEM) goals as goals that promote academic success through improving student access to education, create better financial planning and forecasting, allow for external and internal data to drive decisions and evaluate university progress. These goals help the institution strategically place itself within the higher education market in order to gain distinct competitive advantages over competing colleges and universities. Some goals may be to recruit more in-state students, widen their recruitment territories to attract a larger student target market, or offer competitive financial aid and scholarship opportunities for students to price themselves better within their market. Based on the mission and vision of the institution in the eyes of senior leadership, these strategic goals can change with shifts in the market. Strategic enrollment management plans can change year from year and are designed to attract a highly qualified diverse student body, which can include underrepresented minority students, students interested in specific majors, and international students (Dixon, 1995).

### **The Enrollment Management Team**

The enrollment management (EM) team consists of an array of professionals spanning across various offices within the enrollment management division. Although the nuances of enrollment divisions vary by institution, the enrollment management division usually consists of the following campus offices and departments (Dixon, 1995; Lapovsky, 1999, Kraatz and Ventresca, and Deng, 2010):

* University Admissions (Undergraduate and Graduate)
* Financial Aid
* Career Services
* Student Retention and Advising
* Registrar
* Bursar/Student Accounts
* Student Activities
* Student Employment (i.e. Federal Work Study Programs, GA/GTA Positions, etc.)

The following is an example of how an EM division may be structured adapted from Black (2004):

Figure IV: The Enrollment Management Division, Adapted from Black (2004)

Departments within the enrollment management division may change based on institution. For example, Career Services may be housed under Student Affairs and Retention and Advising may fall under the Academic Affairs division. The EM team is usually headed by a vice-president or other senior administrative title (i.e. Dean of Admissions, Assistant/Associate Provost for Enrollment Management etc.). The various departments within EM are led by a Director, who oversees all management and direction within the department. Typically, the Director has mid-level managers to assist with day-to-day operation and supervision of staff within the division (i.e. Assistant/Associate Directors). The following is an example of what the organizational structure of a University Admissions department may be adapted from Black (2004):

Figure V: The University Admissions Team, Adapted from Black (2004)

### **The Enrollment Management Team- University Admissions**

The University Admissions team is the most critical department within the enrollment management division. The primary function of the University Admissions department is to recruit and enroll a robust student body at the institution (Huddleston, 2000). This is done by the management of the admissions funnel, which looks at the admissions cycle of applicants from point of inquiry through enrollment into the institution (Hossler and Kalsbeek, 2013). The University Admissions team is typically comprised of a Director of Admissions, mid-level administrators (i.e. Assistant/Associate Directors), Admissions Counselors, data entry staff, and administrative assistants (Huddleston, 2000). Job responsibilities of Admissions Counselors typically include national and regional travel to college fairs and high school visits, processing completed applications for admission review, and answering the questions and concerns of prospective students and families.

Aside from national and regional travel as a mode to find prospective students, the University Admissions department also hosts an array of on-campus recruiting events to attract potential students. The most common event hosted by a University Admissions department is an Open House. During Open House events, prospective students and families get to take a closer look at the institution through campus tours, meeting with faculty and staff, and learning more about the academic offerings within the college or university. Additionally, University Admission departments can offer overnight visits and “College for a Day” events, which allow the prospective student to experience what life is like as an enrolled student at that institution.

### **The Student Recruitment Process**

The main purpose of student recruitment is to define the student’s fit with the institution, which examines how the institution best prepares the student to succeed both academically and professionally (Bontrager, 2004). Throughout the admission process, it is the job of an Admissions Counselor to build a strong, positive relationship with students and families. The Admissions Counselors are the individuals who have the most interaction with prospective students and families. The main responsibility of the Admissions Counselor is to actively recruit students to apply and enroll in their institution. The Admissions Counselors have the most interaction with prospective students and families through traditional recruitment initiatives, which include regional travel to various college fairs and high school visits, on-campus individual appointments with prospective students and families, and phone/e-mail conversations with prospective students and families. The University Admissions department is also responsible for the creation and successful execution of various on-campus recruitment efforts and events, such as Open House events, overnight visits, and College for a Day events. These on-campus recruitment initiatives allow prospective students and families to gain further insights as to the academic and extra-curricular resources available at the institution available to help meet the needs of the student body.

The University Admissions Office relies heavily on accurate management of the admissions funnel to achieve its enrollment goals. The admissions funnel looks at the admissions cycle of applicants from point of inquiry through enrollment into the institution (Hossler and Kalsbeek, 2013). The following is a basic picture of the admissions funnel adapted from Lapovsky (1999):

Figure VI: The Admissions Funnel, Adapted from Lapovsky (1999)

The admissions funnel starts out quite large and reduces in size as prospective students move through the funnel. Colleges and universities get large amounts of inquiries from students for many reasons- they are interested in a specific school, a specific program, or the school is in a geographic area relative to their location (Lapovsky, 1999). The funnel reduces in size because, as you move down the funnel, it becomes increasingly more difficult to convert students into the next stage of the funnel. The admissions funnel is an excellent tool that provides statistical data to the Enrollment Management division, specifically the University Admissions department, on their annual enrollment performance and can be used to help shape strategic enrollment management plans (Lapovsky, 1999; (Hossler and Kalsbeek, 2013).

During the inquiry stage, the Admissions Counselor reaches out to students interested in a specific academic program within the institution. The Admissions Counselor answers a wide array of questions ranging from admission requirements to program structure and financial aid (Hossler and Kalsbeek, 2013). After prospective students gather all the information needed about a specific program and submit an application, they then progress down the funnel into the applicant stage. In this stage, the Admissions Counselor works with each student on submitting required admissions documents in order to put forth the best possible application for admission into the institution. After an applicant’s application has been reviewed and an admission decision has been made, the University Admissions Office notifies the student of the outcome. Accepted students are then reached out to by the Admissions Counselor with more information regarding their acceptance and financial aid package in hopes of students submitting their admissions deposit and enrolling into that institution.

### **What is Graduate Enrollment Management?**

Graduate enrollment management (GEM) is a subset of EM that focuses on the population of graduate and professional students. According to the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) website, GEM is defined as “a systematic approach to managing the graduate student lifecycle from initial awareness to alumna/alumnus by integrating the core functions associated with the enrollment and support of a graduate student (NAGAP, 2017).” GEM focuses not only on admissions operations, but what is needed throughout the student lifecycle in order to ensure the student is meeting his or her academic and professional goals, thus GEM relies on constant input and collaboration from various stakeholders and departments on campus. The following picture from NAGAP (2017) depicts GEM operations:



Figure VII: GEM Operations, Adapted from NAGAP (2017)

The GEM Operations graphic from NAGAP (2017) shows how each segment of graduate enrollment funnels into the next area of operations. First, an institution must develop an integrated strategic enrollment management plan that outlines enrollment goals and marketing tactics to attract students. This plan is then used in admissions operations, which focus directly on the active recruitment of students, processing applications, and enrolling graduate students. Enrolled graduate students then work with the Financial Aid division to secure any loans and scholarship funding to supplement the cost of attending graduate school. Additionally, other GEM departments work in unison to ensure graduate students have access to the various campus resources needed to academically, including student support services and graduate student advising and retention. As graduate students matriculate towards graduation, Alumni Relations departments assist with the transition from student to alumni. Several articles point out that alumni departments help students gain access to a wide variety of professional networks that can assist with securing internships and job placements after completing their graduate degree (Jackson and Amparo, 2014; McAlexander and Koenig, 2001; Singer and Hughey, 2002). The GEM model as outlined by NAGAP (2017) emphasizes the importance of strategic planning and collaboration among various departments within GEM to strengthen enrollment efforts and enhance the overall student experience during their graduate studies.

Williams (2008) points out there are distinct differences between undergraduate and graduate enrollment management. First, GEM typically has fewer resources compared to undergraduate enrollment management. Since undergraduate students comprise the majority of the student body at colleges and universities, institutions allocate more resources (i.e. staff, budget money, marketing, etc.) towards the recruitment of this population. The cost of attending a college or university is usually greater for undergraduate students compared to graduate students, thus undergraduate students generate more revenue for institutions. Second, the interaction between the admissions staff and prospective students varies greatly from undergraduate and graduate student populations. Undergraduate students are searching for an institution to be their home for the next four years. They are not only looking for a college or university that offers their program, but they are searching for an institution where they will be able to socialize and make friends, as well as engage in extra-curricular activities like athletics and student clubs/organizations. Therefore, Undergraduate Admissions counselors and staff are focused on showing how their institution is the perfect fit to meet all the students’ needs and desires. In contrast, when graduate students are searching for a college or university, their main focus is whether or not the institution offers their program. Graduate Admissions staff interactions with prospective graduate students is mainly program specific and student-centered (Williams, 2008). The differences in recruiting these populations result in drastic differences within strategic enrollment management plans for undergraduate and graduate students.

### **The Enrollment Management Team- Graduate Admissions**

The main department that interacts most frequently with graduate students is the Graduate Admissions Office. The main function of this division is the recruitment and enrollment of graduate students into various graduate and professional programs offered by the institution. Similar to an Undergraduate Admissions Office, the Graduate Admissions division usually comprises of the following staff: Director of Graduate Admissions, Associate/Assistant Director of Graduate Admissions, Graduate Admissions Counselor, and other clerical and data entry staff. The following is an example of the structure of the Graduate Admissions Staff as adapted from Black (2004):

Figure VIII: The Graduate Admissions Team, Adapted from Black (2004)

The duties of a Graduate Admissions Counselor traditionally include recruiting graduate students, counseling prospective graduate students, and regional travel to increase recruitment efforts (Campbell and Smith, 2014). Since the main focus of the graduate school search for prospective students is based on the academic program, Graduate Admissions Counselors typically recruit for a certain program and are trained in depth on the academic program and curriculum structure. Additionally, graduate students rely heavily on interactions with faculty when making their school choice, thus it is imperative that Graduate Admissions staff collaborate with faculty on recruitment and retention initiatives (Williams, 2008; Campbell and Smith, 2014).

## Social Media

### **What is Social Media?**

Social media has developed over the early span of the 21st century. One of the first social media sites, MySpace, allowed individuals to create a personal profile where they can make posts and share content with friends across the globe. Users also had the ability to create and edit their page to display their individual tastes and personality. Today, the social media industry has consumed our daily lives with constant Facebook “likes”, daily Tweets to our friends, sharing Instagram photos, and endlessly watching videos on Snapchat and YouTube. Reuben (2008) defines social media as the “activities that involve socializing and networking online through words, pictures, and videos.” Commonly used social media sites today include Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Social media allows individuals to research and share information at the tips of our fingers. Many social media sites have mobile user interfaces that can be accessed directly from a cellular telephone or mobile device, which increases the frequency in which social media sites are used (Reuben 2008). A study conducted by Edison Research and Triton Digital (2017) show that an estimated 226 million Americans own a smartphone. Among those owning a smartphone, 95% individuals between the ages of 12-24 report owning a smartphone (Edison Research and Triton Digital, 2017).

Edison Research and Triton Digital (2017) completed a study that examined social media brand awareness and usage in the United States. According to this study, 81% of the US population has a social media account, which is up 5% from 2016 and an increase of 33% since 2010. Findings also show that Facebook is the most used social media site with 67% of Americans using this platform, which is almost double from its nearest competitor, Instagram, at 34% (Edison Research and Triton Digital, 2017). The study also segmented the population into various age ranges: 12-24, 25-54, and 55+. An examination of the 12-24 age range showed the top three social media sites used among this demographic are Snapchat (79%), Facebook (76%), and Instagram (73%) (Edison Research and Triton Digital, 2017). Among those top social media sites, Facebook is reported to be used most frequently by this demographic at 62%.

Social media allows major companies and organizations to do three things critical for success in social media marketing: create buzz in the social media environment, learn from consumers, and target consumers based on their interests and needs (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). In order to target potential consumers, organizations must first know what products and/or services customers are looking for (i.e. cars, education, clothes, etc.). This is completed through a thorough market research study, which can include identifying specific geographic and demographic filters to hone in on a specific target audience (i.e. individuals from Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey between the ages of 17-30 who are looking to pursue a college degree). In the given example, the target audience is refined and specific. This would allow for the organization to conduct an in-depth market study to gather specific information on consumers, including location, age, gender, type of degree, academic program of interest, etc. After the information on the target audience is gathered, the organization can then launch a social media campaign that includes ads and posts that gather the attention and peak interest (“creating buzz”) of the target audience, which would lead to them inquiring further about the product or service (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

### **Various Modes and Uses of Social Media**

The Conversation Prism by Solis (2017) shows the current landscape and unique categories of social media in today’s society:

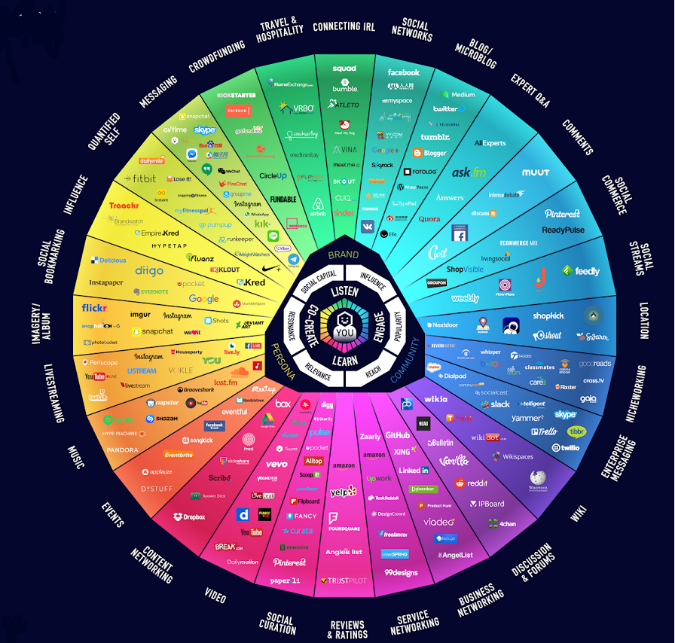


Figure IX: The Social Media Conversation Prism, Solis (2017)

The Conversation Prism, which was first created back in 2008, shows how social media and interactive platforms are used in various modes of communication with one another. The spokes on the wheel each represent a specific theme, such as crowdfunding reviews and ratings, and discussion forms. Each spoke contains a compilation of various social media sites and platforms users can access to obtain and share information regarding each theme. In the center of the prism is the person. The person is surrounded by the information that is passed through social media through listening, learning, co-creating, and engaging. The next layer of the center shows how social media is measured through engagement of individuals online (i.e. Reach, Resonance, Relevance, Popularity, Influence, and Social Capital). The outer most layer of the center shows how the information someone obtains from social media becomes part of their everyday life.

Social media is a widely popular medium and platform that has a wide variety of uses. Most commonly, social media is used as a communication platform. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, are mainly used for communicating with friends, family members, and the greater global community. In September 2017, Facebook reported having 1.4 billion daily users of the social media site for December 2017 (Facebook.com, 2018). According to Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012), the Social Media Examiner, an online social media blog and podcast, the Facebook users, on average, have approximately 130 friends and follow about 80 groups and pages on the social media site. Common uses of social media sites range from sharing photos to posting about important life events and planning an event.

Through the last decade, social media platforms have integrated with technological advancements in mobile application and web-based developments to the point where social media is accessible virtually everywhere, especially through the use of mobile devices. However, in recent years, consumers have begun to use social media sites to research various products and services available in the market (Stelzner, 2016; Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012; Hanna, Rohm, & Crittenden, 2011). According to the 2016 Social Media Marketing Report, which surveyed over 5,000 marketing professionals, approximately 90% of marketing professionals said social media is an important marketing tool used for their business, including 59% of professionals who have been using social media as a marketing tool for at least two years (Stelzner, 2016). It is interesting to note that 7% of respondents (350 individuals) reported working in the education industry, which was tied for third overall in survey responses. This report also provided insights as to what social media platforms were most used and the types of content shared on these sites. The report found that Facebook is used the most in social media marketing (55%) followed by LinkedIn (18%) (Stelzner, 2016). Additionally, Stelzner (2016) also found respondents use social media as a marketing tool to increase exposure to consumers, develop a loyal consumer base, generate consumer leads, and gain further insight on the changing market. With the plethora of ads on social media sites, industry professionals need to develop and post marketing content that will grab the attention of consumers quickly. Approximately 60% of respondents reported using video in their social media marketing plans and 86% use Facebook ads on a regular basis (Stelzner, 2016). Facebook ads show up on the user’s News Feed, which is the main section of the social media platform where all content appears when first logging into the user account. Digital content, most notably videos, highlighting the functionality and overall use of products increases consumer confidence in the product and helps develop brand loyalty (Vinerean, Cetina, Dumitrescu, & Tichindelean, 2013). In recent years, social media has made exponential improvements to help organizations track their return on investment (ROI) of social media activities. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are equipped with advanced analytical software where individuals and organizations can analyze the reach and impact of their social media content on consumer engagement (i.e. “liking” a page, sharing a post or photos, number of page/post/photo views, etc.) (Kumar and Mirchandani, 2012). Kumar and Mirchandani (2012) point out several best practices in increasing an organization’s ROI with respect to social media. The authors state the organization should identify key influencers to help deliver content via social media. These influencers are individuals who have a large following on social media, are a trusted and reliable source for information, and help spread the message the organization wants to convey. In turn to keep these influencers actively engaged and motivated, the organization should incentivize these individuals through offering product discounts, free merchandise, or online recognition for their work (Jumar and Mirchandani, 2012).

### **The Use of Social Media in Higher Education Recruitment**

Social media is a widely used product by millions of people worldwide on a daily basis. More recently, social media is being used by businesses and organizations alike to effectively market their products and services to the global consumer market. With the growing use of social media as a marketing tool coupled with increasing consumer traffic to social media sites, colleges and universities can use social media to market their product (i.e. higher education) worldwide. Sandlin and Peña (2014) conducted a qualitative study examining building authenticity in social media posts as a means for student recruitment. This study included a combination of interviews, journal entries, and focus groups that looked at college-bound student perceptions towards college student blogs on social media. The research found that college-bound students viewed college student blogs as authentic when providing personal information regarding their lived college experiences (Sandlin and Peña, 2014). College students sharing their experiences makes them a knowledgeable and trustworthy resource for prospective college students. Advice from college students on specific topics, such as transitioning into the rigor of a college education and tips for living on campus, can help college-bound students plan ahead to help make the transition into higher education easier on them and their family. Constantinides and Zinck Stango (2011) looked at the use of social media as a recruiting tool for college-bound students in the Netherlands. They found that social media was used as a secondary mode of communication with prospective students. Prospective college students in the Netherlands are more receptive to traditional recruiting tools, such as campus visits, university brochures, and the college website (Constantinides and Zinck Stango, 2011).

Colleges and universities use social media as an easier way to connect with prospective students from all over the world. Not only is it important for the content posted on social media to be informative and relevant to the consumers, but it is also important for these institutions to actively engage in dialogue with prospective students on social media (Stegmeir, 2015; Reuben, 2008). Stegmeir (2015) states that interactions on social media between the institution and prospective students are an important factor in building rapport and positive relationships with prospective students. In order to further illustrate this point, the researcher gives the example of Manchester University in Indiana. The university developed an integrated social media strategy in 2012 where they actively engaged with prospective students via their social media pages. Since the inception of the new strategy, the university has seen its applicant yield rate increase from 16.1% to 24.3%, which is above the national trend (Stegmeir, 2015).

Reuben (2008) conducted a survey of 148 colleges and universities from the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The results showed that over half of the respondents use Facebook and YouTube in their social media strategy. Interestingly, almost half of the institutions reported their social media pages are maintained by their Marketing/Communications Department (48.11%) over the Admissions Office (13.21%) (Reuben, 2008). Additionally, it was reported that the institutions that use social media, on average, make social media posts and updates 1-4 times per week (Reuben, 2008). Social media is an excellent way for Admissions staff and counselors to communicate with students regarding Admissions events and other important notices, such as financial aid, scholarship, and application deadlines.

Greenwood (2012) conducted a study of the top 100 colleges and universities in the United States identified and ranked by *US News, 2010-2011 Best Colleges: National Ranking*. The purpose of this study was to identify the types of social networking sites used by these institutions, which was accomplished by the researcher visiting each school’s website over a five day period of time. The findings showed that 92% of the colleges and universities in this study were using social networking, with 60.9% of them using 3-4 different social networking sites (Greenwood, 2012). The three most used sites identified from this study were Facebook (98.9%), Twitter (95.7%), and YouTube (85.9%) (Greenwood, 2012). Interestingly, Greenwood (2012) reported that 51.1% of colleges and universities were also using iTunes as a social networking site to reach students, which is a site that not appeared in other research on this topic. Based on the results of a survey conducted in 2013, Rogers (2014) found that nearly 33% of prospective college students indicated social media had a strong influence on them during their college search process. Social media is an excellent resource for prospective students to learn about campus life and student experiences, which help students determine if a particular school is a good fit for their personal and educational needs.

## E-Marketing

### **E-Marketing: What is it and How is it Used?**

Marketing is a key component of success for any organization. Marketing can be simply defined as the way in which the organization promotes and advertises its products and services to potential consumers (Coviello, Brodie, Brookes, & Palmer, 2003; Kalyanam and McIntyre, 2002). In order for any organization to be successful with its marketing strategy, they must utilize a marketing mix, which includes a mix of marketing channels such as television and radio, newspaper ads, and mailed advertisements (Litten, 1980). E-Marketing, also known as electronic marketing, can be defined as the strategic use of technology in order to efficiently and effectively promote various products and services to consumers (Coviello et al., 2003). Coviello et al. (2003) assessed the role of e-marketing within the overall construct of a strategic marketing plan. The researchers distributed a survey to 149 firm managers at companies from New Zealand and the United Kingdom from 2000-2001. The findings of this study discovered that 65% of organizations used some aspect of e-marketing in their overall marketing mix. While e-marketing was not their primary mode of marketing, it was noted that e-marketing had some obvious benefits, such as ease of access to consumers and lower marketing costs (Coviello et al., 2003). The firms in the study also highlighted that the successful use of e-marketing strongly depends on the strengths and collaboration of the firm’s Information Technology (IT) department. The IT department would assist in identifying the firm’s capacity for technology in data storage and processing, thus providing precise information about technology uses, limitations, and storage capacity.

E-Marketing is very versatile and can be used in a multitude of ways to achieve the marketing gals of a company. According to Kalyanam and McIntyre (2002), companies should use an e-marketing mix to supplement traditional marketing practices. Commonly used modes of e-marketing include digital advertising (i.e. web advertising, pay-per-click advertising, etc.), search engine optimization (SEO), third-party e-mail advertising, and social media advertising. These modes allow for optimal customization of content and personalization to specifically attract specific customers (Kalyanam and McIntyre, 2002). For example, search engine optimization allows for a specific ad to be shown on a consumer’s search based on certain demographics and previous Internet search history. If a consumer was looking for online college education, they would see specific paid ads on their Internet search populate based on keywords contained within their search. A purpose of online e-marketing ads is to provide consumers enough information to peak their interest in the product or service, which would then drive the consumer to the organization’s website. Kalyanman and McIntyre (2002) state the key components of a well-designed website include a clear and concise home page, navigational bars and search boxes, the layout of each page on the site, site tools, and functionality and user-friendliness. All of these aforementioned items need to be optimized to ensure basic consumer activities on the website, including display, searches, and online ordering (Kalyanam and McIntyre, 2002).

### **The Use of E-Marketing in Higher Education Recruiting**

Marketing is an essential component of any strategic enrollment management plan. As technology has advanced throughout the 21st century, an increasing number of colleges and universities have integrated e-marketing practices into their strategic enrollment management plan. Up until the dawn of the technology age in the early 21st century, Litten (1980) pointed out that a majority of higher education institutions relied mainly on a traditional marketing mix, which may have included television/radio ads and mailed advertisements, in order to effectively market their academic programs to prospective students. Albeit e-marketing is a newer approach with growing popularity in higher education, a small body of literature exists around this topic (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins, 2011; Kranzow and Hyland, 2011; Canterbury, 2000; Brookes, 2003; Ivy, 2008; Helgesen, 2008; Nicolescu, 2009).

Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2006) conducted an empirical study examining some of the literature surrounding higher education marketing. The researchers then conducted a thematic evaluation of the literature to find common themes and important topics common throughout the literature. The researchers found that most prospective students are concerned with the “product” (i.e. academic programs, school’s reputation) and “price” (i.e. cost of attendance, scholarships, etc.) when searching for a college or university (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). Marketing materials that focus on these two topics are of great interest to prospective students, particularly international students. Similarly, Ivy (2008) highlighted the importance of a well-developed marketing mix in higher education marketing. He conducted a study examining the marketing mix of Master of Business Administration programs in South Africa. The results of this study identified the three most common topics in marketing mixes included academic program information (mean 3.7/4.0), prestige of faculty, staff, and students (3.61/4.0), and overall program cost (3.53/4.0) (Ivy, 2008). Canterbury (2000) noted that the primary audience in higher education marketing is prospective undergraduate students. He suggests that higher education marketers focus on information pertaining to academics, student life, and peer socialization as key marketing points that are attractive to prospective undergraduate students

Similarly, Brookes (2003) indicated that higher education markets should have a solid understanding of consumer psychology and how consumer beliefs and values impact their views on a product or service. The author also pointed out that higher education is essentially a business (i.e. offers a product/service to the consumer at a price), therefore the marketing and operational approaches to a college/university should be similar to that of any business. Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins (2011) state that the college/university must highlight and emphasize its brand within their marketing tactics. A college/university’s brand should create an emotional connection with prospective students that highlight the value proposition and benefits of attending the school (Durkin, McKenna, & Cummins, 2012; Kranzow and Hyland, 2011). Nicolescu (2009) states that while branding should highlight the school’s uniqueness, many schools use similar language in brand identification. The brand of colleges and universities should emphasize the institution’s reputation and image. As such, many schools use words like “excellence”, “quality”, and “achievement” in their branding and marketing materials. Nicolescu (2009) says institutions need to use branding as ways to distinguish and differentiate themselves from competitors within the market. Kranzoww and Hyland (2011) suggest the climate of the institution should be present in marketing materials, especially those materials targeting graduate students. By adding the climate into the marketing plan, it “encompasses an environment where the student can participate in higher education in a way that honors their life choices and existing commitments (Kranzow and Hyland, 2011)” (p. 23).

**Summary**

The literature reviewed in this chapter highlights and emphasizes the importance of this study. There is a significant gap in the literature associated with the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruiting. The literature shows how social media is used in undergraduate student recruitment and how prospective students use social media in the college search process (Greenwood, 2012; Reuben, 2008; Stegmeir, 2015). Colleges and universities use social media to disseminate certain messages with specific content to engage prospective undergraduate students. Similarly, e-marketing content that focuses on academics, student life, and peer socialization are especially appealing to prospective undergraduate students (Ivy, 2008; Canterbury, 2000). The existing scholarly research on this topic is extensive surrounding undergraduate student recruitment. When used together, social media and e-marketing practices are excellent marketing tools for student recruitment initiatives, which brings about the purpose of this study to investigate the same communication modes in graduate student recruitment. Additionally, this research will add to the developing body of literature on graduate student recruiting, which is a growing area of attention to many higher education administrators.

# Chapter Three

Research Methodology

**Introduction**

This study sought to investigate the impact of social media and e-marketing practices on graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. The research question is- what are the differences in social media and e-marketing practices used in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States? The researcher hypothesized that differences will exist in the use of social media and e-marketing practices during the graduate student recruitment process between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. In order to study this, the researcher used a survey instrument asking a set of questions regarding the use of social media and e-marketing practices at these institutions. The survey instrument was distributed to a representative sample of the NAGAP membership to gain insight on the use of social media and e-marketing practices of four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States.

## **Research Design**

As suggested by Creswell (2014), this quantitative study used a survey to investigate measurable differences in the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. The dependent variables were social media and e-marketing practices. Social media is defined as a digital form of communications to individuals globally. E-marketing is defined as digital communications created and distributed to a specific population in order to deliver content regarding a specific product or service. The independent variables were four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States, which are defined as post-secondary institutions that offer graduate and professional degree programs to graduate students.

## **Sample**

The participants for this research consisted of members of the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP), a professional organization dedicated to the advancement of the GEM industry. NAGAP offers membership to GEM professionals throughout the United States, Canada, and international countries. There are 649 colleges and universities in the United States, including Washington D.C., that have a NAGAP membership (NAGAP, 2017). This was calculated by examining the NAGAP membership directory and removing duplicate institutions represented in the membership list. The researcher obtained a stratified sample of public and private colleges and universities in the United States for this study. After examining the NAGAP membership directory, there were 241 public and 253 private colleges and universities represented (NAGAP, 2017). Institutions not included in this study were colleges and universities that are for-profit and two-year institutions in the United States. According to the sample size table in adapted from Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the amount of responses needed for this survey were 148 public and 152 private colleges and universities. The researcher targeted only directors and senior level administrators at these colleges and universities in order to obtain the most accurate information from key decision makers at each respective institution and to prevent any duplicate responses from various professionals at the same institution. The researcher used the NAGAP membership list to identify GEM professionals who are administrators within their department. If the participant was not an administrator at his or her institution, he or she was directed to forward the survey to the appropriate person for completion, which ensured the survey was completed by the appropriate individual. The participant consent indicated there is no harm to the individuals other than any stress associated with taking an online survey.

## **Instruments**

The instruments used in this study: the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz 2016 E-Marketing Recruiting Practices Report and a demographic questionnaire. Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (RNL), first founded in 1984 as Noel-Levitz, is a private company that delivers higher education research, services, and consulting to approximately 3,000 colleges and universities. In 2014, Noel-Levitz merged with RuffaloCODY, a leading higher education consulting firm, to expand their services and form what is now called Ruffalo Noel-Levitz. RNL focuses their services and expertise in the areas of enrollment management, student success, and fundraising management. This survey instrument (See Appendix A) has been used since 2014 by Ruffalo Noel-Levitz to collect information on undergraduate admissions e-marketing practices of colleges and universities in the United States. The questions asked in this survey instrument were broad enough where they do not specifically mention “undergraduate admissions”, thus the scope of these questions can be applied to investigate social media and e-marketing practices in graduate enrollment management. The demographic questionnaire (See Appendix B) was used to collect information on the background of the college or university and the questionnaire respondent. Informed consent was obtained via an IRB-approved form (See Appendix C) prior to any data collection. The RNL survey instrument was verified for validity and reliability by an industry expert for its use in this study. This expert was a graduate GEM professional with an administrative position at his or her respective institution. This research presents a less than minimal risk to participants other than the activities of their normal lives.

## **Procedure**

The researcher obtained approval from the Marywood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) on April 26, 2018 to conduct the study. NAGAP distributed an electronic version of the RNL 2016 E-Recruiting Practices Report survey to participants. The researcher approached NAGAP about this study and the organization agreed to distribute the survey and sent survey completion reminders to the targeted sample on behalf of the researcher. This survey was sent to the sample population beginning May 20, 2018 and closed on August 20, 2018 with two reminder notices sent to participants, once in June and July respectively. The survey was distributed via Survey Monkey. The identity of the participants, including their name and institutions, was anonymous. All data collected will be protected and stored in a secure zip file by the researcher for one year. The individuals with access to this data were the researcher and other members of the research team. After that time, all information will be destroyed by erasing the hard drive on the computer to ensure proper disposal. The data was analyzed using SPSS, Version 24.

## **Data Analysis**

All data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi square analysis (Patton, 2014). The researcher used a chi square analysis in identifying relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The researcher used a 95% confidence interval with a p<.05. The following are the sub-problems of the study identified by the researcher as outlined in Chapter 1:

1. What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
2. What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
3. What relationships exist between social media practices of public versus private four-year non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
4. What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
5. What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?
6. What relationships exist between e-marketing practices of public versus private four-year non-profit colleges and universities in the United States?

Sub-problems 1, 2, 4, and 5 were analyzed using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics to capture social media and e-marketing practices at these institutions. Sub-problems 3 and 6 were analyzed using a chi square analysis to determine any significant relationship between the two variables.

# Chapter Four

Results

The researcher conducted several analyses to examine the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. This chapter provides results starting with the response rate, followed by demographic information, each of the subproblems, and lastly some supplemental analysis. Prior to the data analysis, the data was screened for incomplete survey responses and incomplete survey were cleaned from the data.

## **Response Rate**

This survey was distributed to members of the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) membership (N= 649) at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Based on Krejcie (1970), the researcher’s goal was to obtain 148 respondents from four-year public colleges and universities and 152 respondents from four-year private colleges and universities. A total of 63 responses were collected. Twenty-six (26) responses were incomplete and eliminated from the data, thus only thirty-seven (37) total responses were completed and collected for this survey, which is a 5.7% response rate. Responses that were eliminated from the data were comprised of respondents who began the survey, but never completed it. This could have been due to respondents taking the survey in their office and had to turn their attention to more pressing obligations (i.e. pulled into a meeting, attended to students/colleagues in need, etc.). Additionally, the low response rate could be attributed to professionals not wanting to share information on recruiting strategies with potential competing institutions. Some colleges and universities like to keep their “secrets” and recruiting tactics to themselves so they can enroll a larger number of graduate students than competing institutions. The responses were comprised of 23 responses from four-year public and 14 responses from four-year private colleges and universities in the United States.

## **Demographic Information**

The participants in this study were members of NAGAP and currently work in graduate enrollment management (GEM) at a four-year public or private college or university in the United States. A majority of responses were received from California (N=6), New York (N=5), Pennsylvania (N=4), and Texas (N=4). Interestingly, all responses from private colleges and universities (N=14) report offering Master’s degrees, and only 42.86% (N=6) of these institutions offer both professional and/or doctoral degrees. In comparison, 91.3% (N=21) of public colleges and universities in the United States report offering Master’s degrees and 82.61% (N=19) report offering doctoral degrees. Additionally, 26.09% of public institutions report graduate enrollment over 5,000 students and 65.22% (N=15) report a marketing budget below $25,000 annually. Interestingly, 42.86% (N=6) of private institutions report having a marketing budget over $75,000 annually and 50% (N=7) have between 500-999 enrolled graduate students. Other demographic information can be found in Table 1, Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample: States of Respondents.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample: States of Respondents (N=37)

Variable Public (n=23) % Private (n=14) %

State#

California 3 13.04 3 21.43

Connecticut 1 4.34 0 0.00

Florida 0 0.00 1 7.14

Georgia 1 4.34 0 0.00

Idaho 1 4.34 0 0.00

Illinois 1 4.34 0 0.00

Indiana 1 4.34 0 0.00

Massachusetts 1 4.34 2 14.29

Michigan 1 4.34 0 0.00

Minnesota 3 13.04 0 0.00

New York 1 4.34 4 28.57

North Carolina 0 0.00 1 7.14

Ohio 1 4.34 0 0.00

Oregon 0 0.00 1 7.14

Pennsylvania 3 13.04 1 7.14

Texas 4 17.39 0 0.00

West Virginia 1 4.34 0 0.00

Wisconsin 0 0.00 1 7.14

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

# States with no responses were omitted from this table.

Table 2 shows the reported professional positions and staff members within the GEM departments of the respondents. Results show that a majority of respondents from public and private colleges and universities hold the title of Assistant/Associate/Director of Graduate Admissions (N=21) and work in a GEM department with less than five staff members (N=18).

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample: GEM Division Structure (N=37)

Variable Public (n=23) % Private (n=14) %

Professional Position#

Asst./Assoc./Director of 12 52.17 9 64.29

Graduate Admissions

Asst./Assoc./Dean of 1 4.34 1 7.14

Graduate Admissions

Other 10 43.47 4 28.57

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

Staff Members in

GEM Division (Total)

Less Than 5 13 56.52 5 35.71

5-9 4 17.39 5 35.71

10-14 5 21.74 2 14.28

15+ 1 4.34 2 14.28

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

# No responses were recorded for positions listed as Asst./Assoc./Vice-President of Enrollment

Management.

Table 3 lists the academic program levels and number of enrolled graduate students at the respondents’ institutions. All respondents from private institutions offer Master’s degrees (N=14) and less than half (N=6) offer Doctoral and/or Professional degrees. Over half of the public institution respondents offer both Master’s (N=21) and Doctoral (N=19) degrees. Additionally, a majority of private institutions have less than 999 enrolled graduate/doctoral/professional students (N=10) and a majority of public institutions have between 1,000-5,000+ enrolled graduate/doctoral/professional students (N=13).

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample: Academic Programs and Graduate Enrollment (N=37)

Variable Public (n=23) % Private (n=14) %

Type of Graduate/

Professional Programs

Master’s 21 91.30 14 100.0

Doctoral 19 82.61 6 42.86

Professional 14 60.87 6 42.86

Enrolled Grad/Doc/Prof

Students

Under 250 4 17.39 1 7.14

250-499 4 17.39 2 14.29

500-999 2 8.70 7 50.0

1,000-3,000 5 21.74 3 21.43

3,001-5,000 2 8.70 1 7.14

Over 5,000 6 26.09 0 0.00

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

Table 4 reports the marketing budget for respondents. A majority of public institutions report having an approximate GEM marketing budget (N=15), social media budget (N=21), and e-marketing budget (N=21) under $25,000. Interestingly, nearly half of the respondents from private institutions (N=6) report an approximate GEM marketing budget 75,000+ and a social media (N=7) and e-marketing budget (N=8) below $25,000.

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample: GEM Marketing Budget (N=37)

Variable Public (n=23) % Private (n=14) %

Approx. Budget for

GEM Marketing

<$25,000 15 65.22 3 21.43

$25,001-50,000 2 8.69 4 28.57

$50,001-75,000 0 0.00 1 7.14

>$75,000 6 26.09 6 42.86

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

Social Media

Marketing Budget

<$25,000 21 91.30 7 50.0

$25,001-50,000 0 0.00 2 14.29

$50,001-75,000 2 8.70 5 35.71

>$75,000 0 0.00 0 0.00

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

E-Marketing Budget

<$25,000 21 91.30 8 57.14

$25,001-50,000 0 0.00 1 7.14

$50,001-75,000 1 4.34 5 35.71

>$75,000 1 4.34 0 0.00

Total 23 100.0 14 100.0

## **Subproblem 1**

Subproblem 1, “What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Table 5 reports the type of social media used by public institutions. Most public schools used social media sites including: Facebook (86.95%), Twitter, (69.56%), LinkedIn (52.17%), and Instagram (43.47%). None of the public institutions reported using Snapchat, Pinterest, or Vimeo.

Table 5 Social Media Use at Four-Year Public Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=23)

Variable N %

Type of Social Media Used#

Facebook 20 86.95

Twitter 16 69.56

LinkedIn 12 52.17

Instagram 10 43.47

YouTube 9 39.13

Admissions Blog 3 13.04

Student Blog 1 4.34

Faculty Blog 1 4.34

Snapchat 0 0.00

Pinterest 0 0.00

Vimeo 0 0.00

# Respondents could select more than one answer

Additionally, Table 6 shows Facebook usage and posts by public institutions. Only 26.08% (N=6) of public institutions reported using a Facebook site specifically for prospective students and posting content 1-2 times per month (13.04%) or 2-3 times per week (13.04%).

Table 6

Facebook Use at Four-Year Public Non-Profit Colleges/Universities (N=23)

Variable N %

Facebook Used for

Prospective Students?

Yes 6 26.08

No 17 73.92

Total 23 100.0

If Facebook is Used,

How Often Do You Post?

1-2 Times per Month 3 13.04

Weekly 0 0.00

2-3 Times per Week 3 13.04

Daily 0 0.00

Total 6 26.09

Table 7 shows the use of Twitter and video posts at public institutions. Six institutions (26.08%) report using Twitter for prospective students with a majority of those making posts 1-2 times per month (17.39%). Additionally, over half of the respondents (52.17%) report never posting videos on social media channels.

Table 7

Twitter and Video Posts on Social Media at Public Non-Profit Colleges/Universities (N=23)

Variable N %

Twitter Used for

Prospective Students? Yes 6 26.08

No 17 73.92

Total 23 100.0

If Twitter is Used,

How Often Do You Post?

1-2 Times per Month 4 17.39

Weekly 0 0.00

2-3 Times per Week 2 8.69

Daily 0 0.00

Total 6 26.09

How Often Do You

Post Videos on Social Media?

Never 12 52.17

1-2 Times per Month 8 34.78

Weekly 1 4.24

2-3 Times per Week 2 8.69

Daily 0 0.00

Total 23 100.0

## **Subproblem 2**

Subproblem 2, “What social media practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The most commonly used social media sites for four-year private colleges and universities in the United States are Facebook (100%), Instagram (85.74%), Twitter (71.42%), LinkedIn (71.42%), and YouTube (50%). It is interesting to note that each social media choice in the survey was reported used by four-year private colleges and universities in the United States. Table 8 shows the results for social media use.

Table 8

Social Media Use at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=14)

Variable N %

Type of Social Media Used#

Facebook 14 100.0

Instagram 12 85.74

Twitter 10 71.42

LinkedIn 10 71.42

YouTube 7 50.00

Student Blog 3 21.42

Snapchat 1 7.14

Pintrest 1 7.14

Vimeo 1 7.14

Faculty Blog 1 7.14

Admissions Blog 1 7.14

# Respondents could select more than one answer

Table 9 reports on the use of Facebook at private institutions. Only four private institutions (28.58%) reported using Facebook for prospective students and make posts 1-2 times per month (25%), weekly (50%), or 2-3 times per week (25%).

Table 9

Social Media Use at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=14)

Variable N %

Facebook Used for

Prospective Students?

Yes 4 28.58

No 10 71.42

Total 14 100.0

If Facebook is Used,

How Often Do You Post?

Never 0 0.00

1-2 Times per Month 1 25.00

Weekly 2 50.0

2-3 Times per Week 1 25.00

Daily 0 0.00

Total 14 100.0

Table 10 reports Twitter use and video posts on social media at private institutions. Only one institution (7.14%) reported using Twitter for prospective students making posts 1-2 times per month. Five institutions reported posting videos on social media ranging from 1-2 times per month (28.57%) to 2-3 times per week (7.14%). Other responses (42.85%) stated that institutions reported posting videos “quite infrequently”, “once per year”, and “4-6 times per year.”

Table 10

Social Media Use at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=14)

Variable N %

Twitter Used for

Prospective Students? Yes 1 7.14

No 13 92.85

Total 14 100.0

If Twitter is Used,

How Often Do You Post?

Never 0 0.00

1-2 Times per Month 1 7.14

Weekly 0 0.00

2-3 Times per Week 0 0.00

Daily 0 0.00

Total 1 7.14

How Often Do You

Post Videos on Social Media?

Never 3 21.42

1-2 Times per Month 4 28.57

Weekly 0 0.00

2-3 Times per Week 1 7.14

Daily 0 0.00

Other 6 42.85

Total 14 100.0

## **Subproblem 3**

Subproblem 3, “What are the relationships between social media practices of public versus private four-year non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using the Pearson Chi Square and Fisher’s Exact Test. If the analysis violated the parameters of Pearson Chi Square, the researcher then used Fisher’s Exact Test to determine if any statistical significance existed between the variables. The hypotheses for this subproblem were:

H01= Relationships do not exist among social media practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Ha1= Relationships exist among social media practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Table 11 below shows the comparison between e-marketing practices at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States.

Table 11 Social Media Use at Four-Year Public & Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=37)

Social Media Type# Pubic (n=23) % Private (n=14) %

Facebook 20 86.95 14 100.0

Twitter 16 69.56 10 71.42

LinkedIn 12 52.17 10 71.42

Instagram 10 43.47 12\* 85.74

YouTube 9 39.13 7 50.00

Admissions Blog 3 13.04 1 7.14

Student Blog 1 4.34 3 21.42

Faculty Blog 1 4.34 1 7.14

Snapchat 0 0.00 1 7.14

Pintrest 0 0.00 1 7.14

Vimeo 0 0.00 1 7.14

# Respondents could select more than one answer.

\*p<.05

After analyzing this subproblem, the researcher found one significant differencein the Pearson Chi Square analysis, which is the use of Instagram (*x*2(1) =.011, *p*<.05). Results of this study showed that 85.7% of private institutions use Instagram whereas only 43.5% of public institutions use this social media platform.

There were no other significant relationships or trends in the results for this subproblem. Overall, the results of this subproblem show that few relationships exist among social media practices between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Therefore, the null hypothesis H0 is rejected and the alternate hypothesis Ha is accepted.

## **Subproblem 4**

Subproblem 4, “What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year public non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using descriptive statistics. After analyzing the descriptive statistics for this subproblem, the researcher found the most used e-marketing practices include e-mail communication with prospects (95.65%), recruiting pages on the institution’s website (95.65%), website designed for mobile users (65.21%), and using a content management system to update websites (60.86%). Table 13 shows the descriptive statistics for this subproblem.

Table 13

E-Marketing Use at Four-Year Public Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=23)

E-Marketing Practice Used# N %

E-Mail Communication with Prospects 22 95.65

Recruiting Pages on Website 22 95.65

Website Optimized for Mobile Browsers 15 65.21

Content Management System (CMS) Used to Update Website 14 60.86

Online Graduate/Professional Fair 13 56.52

Analytic Resources (e.g. Google Analytics) 12 51.17

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) 11 47.82

Online Display Advertising 9 39.13

Listing on College Planning Site 9 39.13

Webcasts 9 39.13

Online Net Price Calculator 8 34.78

Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout 8 34.78

Pay-Per-Click Advertising on Social Media Channels 8 34.78

Pay-Per-Click Advertising on Search Sites (e.g. Bing) 7 30.43

Virtual Tours 7 30.43

Videos Embedded on Website 7 30.43

Interactive Campus Map 6 26.08

Instant Messaging/Live Chats 6 26.08

Special Landing Pages for E-mail Campaigns 6 26.08

Mobile Apps 5 21.73

QR Codes 5 21.73

Webcam 4 17.39

Cookie Driven Retargeting 4 17.39

Personalized Homepages for Prospects 4 17.39

Student Searches via E-mail 4 17.39

Mass Text Messaging 3 13.04

Tailored Info for Prospective Students Based on SM Profiles 1 4.34

# Respondents could select more than one answer.

A total of 43.47% of respondents from public institutions (N=10) also report having personalized home pages for students that are used throughout the entire admissions funnel from prospects (50%) to deposited/confirmed students (40%). Table 14 shows the results for personalized homepages.

Table 14

E-Marketing Use at Four-Year Public Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=10)

E-Marketing Practice Used N %

Personalized Homepages Used For

Prospects 5 50.00

Inquiries 10 100.0

Applicants 4 40.00

Accepted Students 3 30.00

Deposited/Confirmed Students 4 40.00

## **Subproblem 5**

Subproblem 5, “What e-marketing practices are being used to recruit graduate students at four-year private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using descriptive statistics. After analyzing the descriptive statistics for this subproblem, the researcher found the most used e-marketing practices at four-year private colleges and universities include e-mail communication with prospects (100%), recruiting pages on the institution’s website (100%), online display advertising (78.57%), website optimized for mobile browsers (71.42%), listing on a college planning website (71.42%), and cookie driven retargeting (71.42%). Table 15 shows the descriptive statistics for this variable.

Table 15

E-Marketing Use at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=14)

E-Marketing Practices Used# N %

E-Mail Communication with Prospects 14 100.0

Recruiting Pages on Website 14 100.0

Online Display Advertising 11 78.57

Website Optimized for Mobile Browsers 10 71.42

Listing on College Planning Site 10 71.42

Cookie Driven Retargeting 10 71.42

Pay-Per-Click Advertising on Social Media Channels 9 64.28

Pay-Per-Click Advertising on Search Sites (e.g. Bing) 9 64.28

Analytic Resources (e.g. Google Analytics) 9 64.28

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) 9 64.28

Special Landing Pages for E-mail Campaigns 9 64.28

Videos Embedded on Website 8 57.14

Online Graduate/Professional Fair 7 50.00

Webcasts 6 42.85

Content Management System (CMS) Used to Update Website 6 42.85

Student Searches via E-mail 6 42.85

Personalized Homepages for Prospects 5 35.71

Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout 5 35.71

Tailored Information for Prospective Students Based on SM Profile 5 35.71

Virtual Tours 4 28.57

Mass Text Messaging 4 28.57

Interactive Campus Map 3 21.42

Instant Messaging/Live Chats 3 21.42

Online Net Price Calculator 3 21.42

Mobile Apps 2 14.28

QR Codes 2 14.28

Webcam 2 14.28

# Respondents could select more than one answer.

Additionally, four private colleges and universities reported using personalized home pages for students during all aspects of the admissions funnel from prospect (75%) to deposited/confirmed students (100%). Table 16 shows the results for personalized hompeages.

Table 16

E-Marketing Use at Four-Year Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=4)

E-Marketing Practices Used N %

Personalized Homepages Used For

Prospects 3 75.00

Inquiries 4 100.00

Applicants 4 100.00

Accepted Students 4 100.00

Deposited/Confirmed Students 4 100.00

## **Subproblem 6**

Subproblem 6, “What are the relationships between e-marketing practices of public versus private four-year non-profit colleges and universities in the United States,” was analyzed using the Pearson Chi Square and Fisher’s Exact Test. If the analysis violated the parameters of Pearson Chi Square, the researcher then used Fisher’s Exact Test to determine if any statistical relationships existed between the variables. The hypotheses for this subproblem were:

H02= Relationships do not exist among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Ha2= Relationships exist among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

Table 17 below shows the comparison between e-marketing practices at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States.

Table 17

E-Marketing Use at Four-Year Public & Private Non-Profit Colleges/Universities in the United States (N=37)

E-Marketing Practice Used# Public (n=23) % (n) Private (n=14) % (n)

E-Mail Communication with Prospects 22 95.65 14 100.0

Recruiting Pages on Website 22 95.65 14 100.0

Website Optimized for Mobile Browsers 15 65.21 10 71.42

CMS Used to Update Website 14 60.86 6 42.85

Online Graduate/Professional Fair 13 56.52 7 50.00

Analytic Resources (e.g. Google Analytics) 12 51.17 9 64.28

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) 11 47.82 9 64.28

Online Display Advertising 9 39.13 11\* 78.56

Listing on College Planning Site 9 39.13 10 71.42

Webcasts 9 39.13 6 42.85

Online Net Price Calculator 8 34.78 3 21.42

Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout 8 34.78 5 35.71

Pay-Per-Click Ads on Social Media Channels 8 34.78 9 64.28

Pay-Per-Click Ads on Search Sites (e.g. Bing) 7 30.43 9\* 64.28

Virtual Tours 7 30.43 4 28.57

Videos Embedded on Website 7 30.43 8 21.62

Interactive Campus Map 6 26.08 3 21.42

Instant Messaging/Live Chats 6 26.08 3 21.42

Special Landing Pages for E-mail Campaigns 6 26.08 9\* 64.28

Mobile Apps 5 21.73 2 14.28

QR Codes 5 21.73 2 14.28

Webcam 4 17.39 2 14.28

Cookie Driven Retargeting 4 17.39 10\*\*\* 71.42

Personalized Homepages for Prospects 4 17.39 5 35.71

Student Searches via E-mail 4 17.39 6 42.85

Mass Text Messaging 3 13.04 4 28.57

Tailored Info for Students Based on SM Profiles 1 4.34 5\* 35.71

# Respondents could select more than one answer

\* p<.05

\*\*\* p≤.001

After analyzing this subproblem, the researcher found many significant relationships and trends in e-marketing practices between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. The researcher found significant relationships among the following e-marketing practices: pay-per-click ads on search sites, online display advertising, tailored information for students based on their public profile (i.e. Facebook, etc.), cookie driven retargeting, and special landing pages for e-mail campaigns.

There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.044, *p*<.05) for pay-per-click ads on search sites. Results showed that 64.3% of private institutions use pay-per-click ads on search sites (i.e. Google, Bing, etc.) whereas only 30.4% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.020, *p*<.05) for online display advertising. Results showed that 78.6% of private institutions use online display advertising whereas only 39.1% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

There was a significant relationship in the Fisher’s Exact Test (p=.021) for tailored information for students based on their public profile (i.e. Facebook, Google+, etc.). Results showed that 35.7% of private institutions use tailored information for students whereas only 4.3% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.001, *p*<.05) for cookie driven retargeting ads. Results showed that 71.4% of private institutions use cookie driven retargeting ads whereas only 17.4% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.022, *p*<.05) for special landing pages for e-mail campaigns. Results showed that 64.3% of private institutions use special landing pages for e-mail campaigns whereas only 26.1% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

Additionally, there were some e-marketing practices that showed a trend: pay-per-click ads on social media sites and videos embedded on campus website. There was a trend in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) p= .081) for pay-per-click ads on social media sites. Results showed that 64.3% of private institutions use pay-per-click ads on social media sites whereas only 34.8% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

There was a trend in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) p=.109) for videos embedded on campus website. Results showed that 57.1% of private institutions use videos embedded on college websites whereas only 30.4% of public institutions use this e-marketing practice.

Overall, the results of this subproblem show that many relationships and trends exist among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States. Therefore, the null hypothesis H0 is rejected and the alternate hypothesis Ha is accepted.

## **Supplemental Analysis**

The researcher conducted supplemental analysis examining if any relationships existed between graduate enrollment management (GEM) marketing budget funds and social media and e-marketing practices. The researcher conducted a supplemental analysis using the Pearson Chi Square and Fisher’s Exact Test. If the analysis violated the parameters of Pearson Chi Square, the researcher then used Fisher’s Exact Test to determine if any statistical relationships existed between the variables. The researcher examined the top five social media and top nine e-marketing practices according to responses from the survey to conduct this analysis. The top social media and e-marketing practices were identified by responses to the survey. The supplemental analysis was conducted by transforming the budget variables into two categories: budgets up to $50,000 and budgets $50,001+.

First, the researcher conducted an analysis of social media and e-marketing practices based off the overall GEM marketing budget. After conducting the analysis, the researcher found a significant relationship between overall GEM marketing budget and the following social media sites: Instagram (p=.022), YouTube (p=.019), and LinkedIn (p=.022). There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.022, *p*<.05) for Instagram. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 84.6% use Instagram whereas only 45.8% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this social media platform.

The researcher found a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.019, *p*<.05) for YouTube. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 69.2% use YouTube whereas only 29.2% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this social media platform.

The researcher found a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.022, *p*<.05) for LinkedIn. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 84.6% use LinkedIn whereas only 45.8% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this social media platform.

Similarly, the researcher found a significant relationship between overall GEM marketing budget and the following e-marketing practices: online graduate/professional school fairs (p=.040), search engine optimization (SEO) to improve search results (p=.040), and online display advertising (p=.001). The researcher found a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.040, *p*<.05) for online graduate/professional school fairs. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 76.9% use online graduate/professional fairs whereas only 41.7% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

The researcher found a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.040, *p*<.05) for search engine optimization to improve search results. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 76.9% use search engine optimization whereas only 41.7% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

The researcher found a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.001, *p*<.05) for online display advertising. Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 92.3% use online display advertising whereas only 33.3% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

The researcher found a trend in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) p=.068) for analytic resources (such as Google analytics). Of the institutions that reported having an overall GEM budget of $50,001+, 76.9% use analytic resources (such as Google analytics) whereas only 45.8% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

The researcher then conducted an analysis of social media use based off social media marketing budgets. After conducting the analysis, the researcher found one significant relationship between social media marketing budget and LinkedIn (p=.015). There was a significant relationship in the Pearson Chi Square analysis (*x*2(1) =.015, *p*<.05) for LinkedIn. Of the institutions that reported having a social media marketing budget of $50,001+, 100% use LinkedIn whereas only 50% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this social media platform.

The researcher then conducted an analysis of e-marketing practices based off e-marketing budgets. After conducting the analysis, the researcher found no significant relationships between e-marketing practices and e-marketing budgets. However, the researcher found two trends between the variables: online display advertising (p=.097) and search engine optimization (p=.072). The researcher found a trend in the Fisher’s Exact Test (p=.097) for online display advertising. Of the institutions that reported having an e-marketing budget of $50,001+, 85.7% use online display advertising whereas only 46.7% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

The researcher found a trend in the Fisher’s Exact Test (p=.072) for search engine optimization. Of the institutions that reported having an e-marketing budget of $50,001+, 85.7% use online display advertising whereas only 46.7% of institutions with a budget up to $50,000 use this e-marketing practice.

In conclusion, institutions who have graduate enrollment management marketing budgets $50,001+ use more social media and e-marketing practices compared to institutions with budgets under $50,000.

# Chapter Five

# Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study aimed to examine the social media and e-marketing practices used in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Prior to this research, there have been studies conducted examining various uses of social media and e-marketing practices in undergraduate student recruitment (Sandlin and Peña, 2014; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Ivy, 2008; Nicolescu, 2009; and Kalyanman and McIntyre, 2002), but there are not any current studies investigating these same practices in graduate student recruitment.

This research study had two hypotheses each looking to see if differences existed among social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Participants for this study were recruited from the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) and current higher education graduate enrollment management professionals. The results of this study showed that some relationships do exist among social media and many exist among e-marketing practices at these institutions and both hypotheses were rejected.

In this section, the researcher will begin by interpreting the results of the study. These results will then be compared to any main points drawn from the scholarly literature identified in Chapter Two of this study. The researcher will then discuss these results as they pertain to graduate enrollment management practices in higher education. Finally, recommendations for professional practice and future research on this topic will be identified and discussed.

## **Discussion**

There were many significant relationships in terms of e-marketing practices, such as online display advertising, tailored websites for students based on their public profile, cookie driven retargeting, landing pages for e-mail campaigns, and pay-per-click ads on search sites (such as Google, Bing, etc.). Many of these e-marketing practices are driven by a consumer’s previous web searches and website visits, thus delivering specific content to consumers based on searches may yield a higher interest in a particular product or service, which in this study is graduate education. Additionally, combining social media with specific e-marketing practices, such as cookie driven retargeting and tailored information based on a public profile, can ensure that colleges and universities are delivering proper content and information to this targeted population (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006; Ivy, 2008; and Nicolescu, 2009). Certain retargeting ads, pay and e-mail campaigns send consumers to a specific landing page; therefore it is necessary that colleges and universities have a well-designed and user-friendly website (Kalyanman and McIntyre, 2002).

The descriptive results of the survey do show some interesting differences between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States in terms of e-marketing practices. First, four-year private colleges and universities use more of the following e-marketing practices than four-year public institutions: cookie driven retargeting (71.42% private; 17.39% public), tailored information for prospective students based on social media profiles (35.71% private; 4.34% public), pay-per-click ads on social media sites (64.28% private; 34.78% public), and pay-per-click ads on search sites (64.28% private; 30.43% public). Depending on the level and amount of e-marketing an institution is undertaking, costs may vary significantly. For example, Facebook ads on their social media site allow users to create and run paid advertising for as little as $1 per day (Facebook Business, 2018). These paid ads can target specific Facebook users based off demographic information from their public profiles, such as geographic area, interests, age, etc. There are also various e-marketing platforms and programs, such as Salesforce Marketing Cloud, that colleges and universities can use to focus on social media and digital marketing campaigns. Salesforce Marketing Cloud is operated using a web-based platform that can create, disseminate, and track various e-marketing campaigns (e-mails, text messages, social media advertising, etc.) to specific target audiences (in this case, prospective students). Additionally, this software can be easily integrated into various customer relationship management (CRM) systems that colleges and universities use to track inquiries and applicants through the admissions funnel (among other uses) ([www.getapp.com](http://www.getapp.com), 2018). Pricing for Salesforce Marketing Cloud begins at $400 per month and can go up to $1,250 per month depending on various plugins and programs being used within the platform ([www.getapp.com](http://www.getapp.com), 2018).

One reason why private institutions may utilize these e-marketing practices more than public institutions is because they need to stay competitive in terms of recruiting students. Generally speaking, public institutions, such as the plethora of state colleges and universities, typically receive a larger amount of student applications annually compared to private institutions for a number of reasons (i.e. public college tuition is cheaper than private college tuition, public institutions offer a larger selection of academic majors and programs compared to private institutions, public institutions offer greater amounts of funding and financial aid compared to private institutions, etc.). According to the National Center of Education Statistics, the average cost of graduate tuition and fees in 2012-13 at public colleges and universities in the United States was $11,617 and graduate tuition and fees costs $26,551 at private colleges and universities (National Center of Education Statistics, 2018). Therefore, private colleges and universities need to conduct a greater deal of personal communication and target marketing to prospective students to be among some of their possible college choices. However, there are some large private institutions, such as Ivy league institutions, that would be an exception to this as they see a large applicant pool annually due to their reputation and prestige. Therefore, it makes sense that 42.85% (N=6) of private colleges and universities report having an e-marketing budget between $25,001-75,000 annually because they need to use these tactics in order to effectively market to graduate students in the higher education industry.

After analyzing the data, the researcher discovered that few differences do exist in both social media and e-marketing practices between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. The only social media difference among four-year public and private colleges and universities included the use of Instagram. Results showed that more private colleges and universities (85.7%; n=12) are using Instagram compared to public colleges and universities (43.5%; n=10). Additionally, results from the supplemental analysis showed that institutions with larger graduate enrollment management (GEM) marketing budgets ($50,001+) use Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn more compared to institutions with smaller GEM marketing budgets (up to $50,000). The descriptive results of this study show that popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, are being used more by private colleges and universities compared to public institutions (see Table 11). The top three social media sites used by institutions in Greenwood (2012) were Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Omnicore Agency, a digital marketing research firm, reports that Instagram currently has over 1 billion monthly active users, which is significantly more than active monthly users on Twitter (335 million) and LinkedIn (63 million) (<https://www.omnicoreagency.com>, 2018). Facebook and YouTube have the most active monthly users with 2.23 billion and 1.9 billion respectively (<https://www.omnicroeagency.com>, 2018). Additionally, Omnicore Agency (2018) reports that 59% of all Instagram users are between the ages of 18-29, while only 36% of Twitter users in the United States are between ages 18-29. The large amount of monthly Instagram users shows that this social media platform is becoming more popular with a younger demographic. With the competitive landscape of graduate student recruitment, private institutions need to maximize exposure to prospective students in order to sustain a fruitful applicant pool, which may explain why Instagram is being used more by private colleges and universities compared to public institutions.

Additionally, Omnicore Agency (2018) reports that 87 million Millennials have a LinkedIn profile. Millennials were born roughly between 1982-2002, which put them between the ages of 16-36 (Rickes, 2009). LinkedIn is a social media platform where user profiles are created in a “resume style” listing academic and professional background among other experiences and individual skillsets. Approximately 61 million LinkedIn members are listed as “senior-level influencers” in key decision-making positions (Omnicore Agency, 2018). Many working professionals use LinkedIn as a professional networking tool to find employment and various volunteer opportunities. This social media platform lends itself well to colleges and universities recruiting graduate students for numerous reasons. First, working professionals are always looking to advance their careers. Aside from work experience requirements, some professional positions may require an advanced graduate degree in order to be a qualified candidate. Colleges and universities can target LinkedIn members based off specific keywords or phrases (such as industry, job title, company name, etc.) and deliver specific content about a graduate program that would help them advance their career. These paid ads should be short and quickly draw the user’s attention. For example, a company manager may be attracted towards an Executive MBA program as it will allow him/her to further develop their business and leadership skills. The ad this individual may see on their LinkedIn homepage or banner may read, “Earn Your MBA Online in 12 Months.”, or “Executive Online MBA: Learn Today to become a Leader Tomorrow.” These examples would spark the attention of the user and prompt them to click on the ad, which would take them to the institution’s website and provide more information on the program. As seen, social media is a widely used and popular mode of communication that needs to be used more strategically in strategic graduate enrollment management plans by public and private colleges and universities to recruit graduate students.

Furthermore, it makes sense that institutions with larger overall GEM marketing budgets ($50,001+) are using social media sites and specific e-marketing practices more compared to institutions with lower budgets (up to $50,000). Advertising on certain social media sites is inexpensive and similar in operation. For example, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram allow users to set their own budget that will target a specific audience (i.e. a number of people in a defined area over a period of time). Users can establish a budget where they will be billed on a per day, per-week, or per month basis ([www.business.linkedin.com](http://www.business.linkedin.com), 2018; [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com), 2018; [www.business.instagram.com](http://www.business.instagram.com), 2018). The more money allocated towards their daily, weekly, or monthly budget will increase the number of consumers who view these ads. Also, users can set up various social media marketing campaigns where they are billed a cost per view (CPV) or cost per click (CPC) versus a flat amount. The large amount of active monthly users of these popular social media platforms, such as YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram, coupled with low costs for paid advertising on these sites allow for institutions to increase the amount and frequency of their ads to their target audience (i.e. prospective graduate students). Moreover, the low costs associated with social media marketing can allow for institutions to increase GEM marketing and recruitment efforts in particular markets and areas where they currently do not recruit students (i.e. geographic and budget constraints limit in-person recruiting/travel to specific areas for graduate student recruitment).

In terms of overall GEM marketing budgets and e-marketing practices, institutions with larger budgets ($50,001+) are using the following e-marketing practices more than institutions with smaller budgets (up to $50,000): online graduate/professional school fairs, search engine optimization (SEO), and online display advertising. According to Google, Inc. (2018), users can launch paid advertising on the Google search engine according to their own budget. Similar to social media sites, users can create their own budget for Google ads and, based off the budget amount and duration (daily, weekly, monthly), these ads will reach consumers based off demographic criteria established by the user (i.e. geographic region, search keywords, etc.). Costs will vary based off the length of time ads run, the position listed within search results, and consumer clicks on your advertisement ([www.ads.google.com](http://www.ads.google.com), 2018). Also, the cost of analytic resources varies from program to program. As mentioned previously, Salesforce Marketing Cloud begins at $400 per month and can go up to $1,250 per month depending on programs used within the software ([www.getapp.com](http://www.getapp.com), 2018). Google Analytics is a free service from Google that tracks website visits, online searches, and click rates for users ([www.analytics.google.com](http://www.analytics.google.com), 2018). However, users can purchase Google Analytics 360 that will integrate their search and display ads into the program to track customer acquisition costs and rates, funnel analysis, and state-of-the-art reports and analyses ([www.analytics.google.com](http://www.analytics.google.com), 2018). These types of online advertising and analytic resources allow colleges and universities to maximize online marketing exposure to recruit a larger amount of graduate students.

Online graduate/professional school fairs are another way institutions can increase their exposure to a wide range of prospective graduate students. CareerEco is a company that operates an online platform for virtual graduate/professional school and career fairs to be held online. After examining their website, the average cost to register for an online graduate/professional school fair is between approximately $300-400 per event ([www.careereco.com](http://www.careereco.com), 2018). The cost associated with attending an online graduate/professional school fair may be more cost effective compared to sending an admission counselor to attend an in-person graduate/professional school fair (after factoring in the cost for event registration, travel and hotel accommodations, food and mileage expenses, etc.). Additionally, online graduate/professional school fairs allow institutions to increase their recruitment efforts in various markets and geographic areas they may have been limited to in the past due to budget and/or staff constraints.

Finally, results of the supplemental analysis show that 50% (n=7) of private colleges and universities have overall GEM marketing budgets of $50,001+ while only 26.09% (n=6) of public colleges and universities have an overall GEM marketing budget of $50,001+ (see Table 4). These findings are consistent with the researcher’s earlier discussion regarding tuition and fees at public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Annual graduate tuition and fees at public institutions was $14,937 less than graduate tuition and fees at private colleges and universities for the 2012-2013 academic year, which shows that it is more than twice as expensive to attend graduate school at a private institution versus a public institution (National Center of Education Statistics, 2018). Therefore, the results of the supplemental analysis make sense that private colleges and universities in the United States would need a larger overall GEM marketing budget compared to public institutions in order to strategically use social media and e-marketing practices to effectively recruit graduate students.

When examining ethical implications of higher education, professionals need to ensure they are keeping the best interest of the student in mind. Stefkovich and O’Brien (2004) speaks about the “Best Interests” model. It is the duty of the institution and professionals therein to ensure that rights, responsibilities, and respect are at the forefront of guiding ethical decisions surrounding the best interest of the student (Stefkovich and O’Brien, 2004). Within the realm of GEM, the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) has a set of guidelines for best practices among graduate enrollment management professionals. These practices include “fairness and non-discrimination”, “maintain prospective and current students’ information in confidence and respect the private nature of these data…”, and “treat each student as an individual in developing a fundamental educational plan” (p. 1) (NAGAP, 2018). Additionally, these guidelines also state that GEM professionals should present clear and transparent information to prospective students through all communication channels, including social media. When advising prospective students, GEM professionals should always be acting in the best interest of the student. Students should be guided to programs and institutions that fit their personal, academic, and professional needs. Sometimes, graduate students may be “undecided” or unclear as what direction to go in order to enter a certain industry or gain employment. When this occurs, GEM professionals should inform students of all program options available. For example, if a student informed a Graduate Admissions representative that he or she was interested in pursuing a career in higher education, the student should be informed of the variety of academic programs available to help enter the higher education field (i.e. Higher Education Administration, Student Affairs Administration, etc.). Not every institution is going to have academic programs to fit a student’s academic and professional goals, thus colleges and universities should never guide a student to enroll into a dissimilar program at their institution solely to enroll one more student.

When using social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment, content and program information should not lead students with false promises, such as “guaranteed admission” or “guaranteed scholarship/financial aid”. These statements may be attractive to some prospective students causing them to click on these advertisements and/or apply to these programs. This unethical practice allows institutions to see higher metrics on the success of social media and e-marketing campaigns, as well as increased inquiries and applicants in the admissions funnel. After examining the best practices of GEM professionals according to NAGAP (2018), there is very little mention on social media and e-marketing communications used in graduate student recruitment.

## **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations to the study included: the published survey instrument did not have any reported validity and reliability statistics. Therefore, the researcher was required to seek assistance from a panel of experts to verify the validity and reliability for the survey instrument. The researcher was also limited by the response rate of the survey. Due to a low response rate, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States.

## **Implications**

This research lends itself to numerous implications for professional practice. First, the results of this study highlight specific social media and e-marketing practices that colleges and universities should examine and explore implementing within their strategic enrollment management marketing plan. Previous literature and research show that high school students are using various modes of social media throughout the college search process. The information delivered to students via social media is unique, can be accessed quickly and easily, and delivers the specific message(s) colleges and universities want to convey to prospective students. It will only be four years before these high school students begin the college search process for graduate schools. Since these students are already familiar with using social media in the undergraduate school search process, they will most likely revert back to what is familiar to them and repeat the same steps when searching for graduate and professional school. There is no reason to “reinvent the wheel” in this case. Students will stick to what is familiar with them and products they know how to use well. Thus, colleges and universities should look towards mirroring undergraduate recruitment social media marketing practices and strategies to be used for graduate student recruitment.

Additionally, colleges and universities will not only be able to see what social media and e-marketing practices are being used within the industry, but they will be able to take these results and determine the proper enrollment management marketing budget needed to increase their prospect applicant pool in future recruiting cycles. These results show what social media and e-marketing practices are being used within the higher education industry today. Colleges and universities can take these results and compare them with their own social media and e-marketing recruiting strategies to see what can be changed, implemented, and/or revamped. This will allow them to determine the appropriate amount of financial resources and budget needed to implement changes or enhancements to social media and e-marketing practices.

While generalizability is somewhat limited, the researcher suggests that colleges and universities conduct a SWOT analysis on their current social media and e-marketing practices to see where improvements can be made in order to increase and sustain a fruitful applicant pool. The SWOT analysis should be conducted by the appropriate office(s) responsible for maintaining and delivering graduate enrollment management social media and e-marketing content (i.e. graduate admissions division, marketing/communications department, etc.). This analysis should be conducted every two to three years in order to ensure the institution is keeping pace with industry changes and enhancements in social media and e-marketing technology and practices. This will further ensure that colleges and universities can maintain a competitive advantage within this crowded marketspace.

It is also recommended that colleges and universities allocate increased budget resources to e-marketing and social media recruitment practices and initiatives. The days of mailing out program catalogs and bulky, lengthy brochures to students are almost gone, but some colleges and universities believe this is a great way to send a large amount of information to students. A majority of this content has been digitized by colleges and universities and is now housed on their websites. Costs for sending materials through traditional mail have increased exponentially over the years. It would be more cost effective if institutions take money from a “mailing budget” and shift those resources towards social media and e-marketing practices. Many prospective students receive bulky mailings from numerous colleges and universities they aren’t even interested in simply because that institution purchased prospect names and contact information from listservs, such as SAT and GRE names. A majority of those mailings received by students are then thrown away because they view it as “junk mail”. It is shown that colleges and universities with larger graduate enrollment management (GEM) marketing budgets have greater uses of various social media and e-marketing practices. By reallocating budget resources to social media and e-marketing practices, colleges and universities can become more strategic in delivering specific, relevant content and information to prospective students whom they have a better chance of recruiting compared to sending mass mailings to a purchased listserv.

Finally, the researcher noted that NAGAP (2018) mentions very little on the use of social media and e-marketing practices in communication with prospective graduate students. The ethical implications of serving the “best interest of the student”, according to Stefkovich and O’Brien (2004), should be integrated into social media and e-marketing practices at colleges and universities by ensuring the validity and integrity of communication with prospective students. Therefore, the researcher recommends that NAGAP revisits these best practices and develop ethical guidelines for social media and e-marketing use within graduate enrollment management.

## **Future Research**

The researcher has identified several areas for future research. First, future research can be conducted on social media and e-marketing practices of various departments/divisions within colleges and universities in the United States. It would be interesting to see if there are specific social media and e-marketing practices used by specific departments/divisions (i.e. engineering, science, medicine, law, business, etc.) and how they impact graduate student recruitment. Additionally, research can be conducted on the use of social media and e-marketing practices on international student recruitment. International student recruitment is a growing population of interest for student recruitment at colleges and universities in the United States. It would be interesting to see if there are any social media and e-marketing practices that better impact international student recruitment compared to domestic student recruitment. Additionally, a similar research study can be conducted looking at social media and e-marketing practices at four-year private and public for-profit colleges and universities in the United States. Including institutions from the for-profit higher education sector may increase the response rate and allow for comparisons to be made between for-profit and colleges and universities in the United States in terms of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment. Finally, research can be conducted to measure the impact of social media and e-marketing practices on graduate school applications. This research can investigate how much impact social media and e-marketing content influenced the student’s decision to apply and enroll into a particular college/university. This will be able to better quantify a return on investment (ROI) of budget money spent towards social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at colleges and universities in the United States. The researcher examined if relationships existed between social media and e-marketing practices at four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Results of this study found that few significant relationships and trends exist between social media practices, however many significant relationships and trends exist between e-marketing practices among the respondents of this study. Four-year private colleges and universities were using Instagram more compared to four-year public colleges and universities. A trend among using student blogs showed that more four-year private colleges and universities were using this social media mode compared to public institutions in this study. Additionally, the results of this study found many relationships and trends among e-marketing practices between four-year public and private colleges and universities in the United States. Results showed that private institutions were using specific e-marketing practices more than public institutions, such as online display advertising, tailed information based on students’ public profiles, cookie driven retargeting, landing pages for e-mail campaigns, and webcasts. Trends in e-marketing practices found that more private institutions were using student searches via e-mail and pay-per-click advertising compared to public institutions in this study.

Since there is a very limited amount of research published in the field of graduate enrollment management, this study helps lay the foundation for future research studies within this field of higher education. As stated earlier, colleges and universities need to think creatively and strategically to gain and sustain a competitive advantage within the crowded higher education market. Current undergraduate students are turning to social media and digital content to conduct their college search process and will most likely continue to use those same communication channels when searching for graduate school. It is vital for the success of any strategic graduate enrollment management plan to integrate social media and e-marketing practices into their recruitment strategy and marketing plan in order to meet and/or exceed annual recruitment and student enrollment targets.

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# Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Section 1: E-Recruiting Practices in General, Including Social Media

Which of the following does your institution use? (Please check all that apply)

* Student searches via e-mail
* E-mail communication with prospective students
* Recruiting pages on website
* Virtual tours
* Interactive campus map
* Instant messaging/Live chats
* Mass test messaging (i.e. to a large group)
* Webcasts
* Website optimized for mobile browsers
* Mobile apps
* QR codes
* Webcam
* Online net price calculator
* Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts or other video chat services
* Pay-per-click ads on social media sites
* Pay-per-click ads on search sites like Google, Bing, or Yahoo
* Online display advertising
* Online graduate/professional school fair
* Listing on college planning websites/online directories
* Tailored information for students based on their public profile (on Facebook, Google+, etc.)
* Cookie driven “retargeting” ads that target users who’ve previously visited your website
* Special landing pages for e-mail campaigns
* Videos embedded on campus website
* Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content
* Analytic resources such as Google Analytics
* Search engine optimization process to improve organic search results
* Personalized home page URL/portal for prospective students
* Other (Please specify)

If you checked the box above indicating that you use a personalized home page URL/portal for prospective students, which students do you provide this for? (Please check all that apply)

* Prospects/Search List (i.e. prospective students who haven’t yet inquired or applied)
* Inquiries
* Applicants
* Accepted students
* Deposited/Confirmed Admits
* Other (Please specify)

If you checked the box above indicating that you use a Content Management System (CMS) to update or edit website content, do staff of your admissions/recruitment office have permission to update website content?

* Yes
* No

Which of the following social media tools are you using with a goal of engaging prospective students and their families?

* Facebook
* Twitter
* YouTube
* Instagram
* Snapchat
* Tumblr
* Storify
* Pinterest
* Google+
* Vine
* Vimeo
* LinkedIn
* Reddit
* Student blog
* Faculty blog
* Admissions/recruitment representative blog
* Other (Please specify)

How often do you post videos to YouTube, Vimeo, or other social media that are intended to support recruitment?

* Daily
* 2-3 times a week
* Weekly
* 1-2 times a month
* Never
* Other (Please specify)

Do you have a Facebook page specifically for prospective students or their families?

* Yes
* No

If Yes, how often do you post new items on this Facebook page related to admissions, enrollment, or financial aid?

* Daily
* 2-3 times a week
* Weekly
* 1-2 times a month
* Other (Please specify)

Do you have a Twitter account specifically for prospective student or their families?

* Yes
* No

If Yes, how often do you send Tweets on this account related to admissions, enrollment, or financial aid?

* Daily
* 2-3 times a week
* Weekly
* 1-2 times a month
* Other (Please specify)

How much staff time is allocated for updating social media for your institution? (Please select the best response)

* This is a part-time responsibility for one person.
* This is a part-time responsibility for two or more people.
* This is a dedicated role that receives one person’s full-time attention
* This is a dedicated role that receives two or more people’s full-time attention

What is your institution’s level of use of unpaid interactive marketing (online advertising)?

* None
* Occasional/just beginning
* A major part of our recruitment

Do you sometimes check a prospective student’s social media sites (ex. Facebook pages) or do any other type of web search to learn more about a student’s background or interests?

* Yes
* No

Section II: Use of Cell/Mobile Numbers and E-mail

Do you collect cell/mobile numbers from your prospective students?

* Yes
* No

If Yes, how do you use these cell/mobile numbers? (Please check all that apply)

* Notifications of impending deadlines, events, acceptance, etc.
* Call simply to build a relationship between the caller and the student
* Call from telecounseling call centers
* Mass text messages
* Individual text messages
* Other (Please specify)

If you checked the above box for “Mass text messages”, do you specifically request permissions to send mass text messages?

* Yes
* No

Do you provide cell phones for your admissions counselors?

* Yes
* No

If Yes, which of the following practices apply to how your counselors use their office-provided phones to recruit students? (Please check all that apply)

* Counselor promote their cell phone numbers to prospective students
* Counselors send and receive text messages from prospective students
* While traveling, counselors contact prospective students
* Counselors use office-provided phones for social media
* There is an office policy that guides the use of office-provided cell phones
* Other (Please specify)

How do you deliver mass e-mails to prospective students? (Please check all that apply)

* We use a campus-based system, such as Outlook, to send mass e-mails
* We use a campus-based CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system to send mass e-mails
* We use a third-party vendor to send mass e-mails (please specify vendor’s name)
* We use another approach to deliver mass e-mails to prospective students (Please specify)

About how many mass e-mails does a typical prospective student receive from your institution over the course of a recruitment cycle? (Please enter a specific number estimate)

Which types of prospective students receive mass e-mails from your institution? (Please check all that apply)

* Prospects/Search List (prospective students that haven’t yet inquired or applied)
* Inquiries
* Applicants
* Accepted students
* Deposits/Confirmed Admits
* Other (Please specify)

Which markets receive mass e-mails from your institution? (Please check all that apply)

* First-time graduate students
* Transfer graduate students
* Adult learners
* International students
* Continuing education/non-credit learners
* Other (Please specify)

Final Section: Your Institution’s Web Presence

Which of the following types of information are provided-or directly linked from- your non-mobile website’s primary webpage for prospective students AND/OR your mobile website’s primary webpage for prospective students? (Please answer only in the right-hand column if your institution only has a mobile website)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Our **non-mobile** website’s primary webpage for prospective students | Our **mobile** website’s primary webpage for prospective students |
|  |  |
| List of academic programs/majors |  |  |
| Descriptions of academic programs/majors |  |  |
| Financial aid/scholarships |  |  |
| Cost |  |  |
| Net price calculator |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| Enrollment/admissions information |  |  |
| Campus visit details |  |  |
| Admissions event RSVP  opportunities |  |  |
| Recruitment-oriented webinars  Applications/application services |  |  |
| Live online chat with Admissions Representatives |  |  |
| Student life information  Housing Information |  |  |
| Athletic programs  Academic calendar |  |  |
| Campus map/directions to school  City/region information  jj |  |  |
| Links to social media accounts (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, etc.) |  |  |
| Videos  Student testimonials/student blogs  Messages about |  |  |
| Messages about student outcomes  College/university ranking information  N |  |  |
| News feed or recent news articles  Other types of information (specify) |  |  |
| None of the above |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Which of the following mobile strategies have you adopted? (Please check all that apply)

* Responsive/adaptive web design
* Specific mobile site (separate from main website)
* Mobile applications to support all uses generically
* Mobile applications to support prospective students specifically
* Mobile applications to support current students specifically

Does your institution have a mobile-optimized website?

* Yes
* No

If No, when does your institution expect to have a mobile-optimized website?

* Within a year
* Within two years
* 3 or more years from now
* We have no current plans for a mobile-optimized website

Which of the following can prospective students submit or view on your institution’s primary website AND/OR mobile-optimized website? (Please answer only in the right-hand column if your institution only has a mobile website)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Our **non-mobile** website | Our **mobile** website |
|  |  |
| Inquiry form |  |  |
| Application form |  |  |
| Housing Application |  |  |
| Financial aid/scholarship application |  |  |
| RSVP for admissions events |  |  |
| Campus visit form |  |  |
| Course registration form |  |  |
| Confirmation of acceptance/deposit form |  |  |
| Net price calculator |  |  |
| Other forms (Please specify)  opportunities |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Does your institution use a net-price calculator on your website?

* Yes
* No

How much did your website cost increase or decrease compared to last year?

* Decreased 2% or more
* Stayed about the same
* Increased 2% or more

How much staff time is dedicated for maintaining admissions-specific content and services on your institution’s primary website and, if applicable, its mobile-optimized website?

* This is a part-time responsibility for one person
* This is a part-time responsibility for two or more people
* This is a dedicated role that receives one person’s full-time attention
* This is a dedicated role that receives two or more people’s full-time attention

If you had new budget dollars, what area of your e-recruitment practices would you invest in first? (Please select your best response)

* Website content
* Website design
* Social media
* E-mail communications
* Paid interactive advertising (online advertising)
* Search Engine Optimization
* Other (Please specify)

# Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Do you work at a public or private institution?

Public institution

Private institution

What state is your institution located (Please select from the dropdown box)

What is your position at your institution (Please select best answer that describes your job)

Asst./Assoc./Director of Graduate Admissions

Asst./Assoc./Dean of Graduate Admissions

Asst./Assoc. Vice-President of Enrollment Management

Vice-President of Enrollment Management

Other (Please list position/title)

Is your institution a non-profit college/university?

Yes

No

What type of graduate and/or professional programs do you offer? (Please select all that apply)

Master Degrees (i.e. MA, MS, MEd, etc.)

Doctoral Degrees (i.e. Ph.D, Ed.D, etc.)

Professional Degrees (i.e. MD, JD, MBA, DMD, etc.)

Approximately, how many graduate and/or doctoral students are enrolled at your institution?

Under 250

250-499

500-999

1,000-1,499

1,500-1,999

Over 2,000

Approximately, how many staff members work in your Graduate Admissions/Enrollment division (full-time and part-time)

Less than 5

5-9

10-14

15+

What is your approximate budget for graduate enrollment marketing?

$0-1,000

$1,001-3,000

$3,001-6,000

$6,001-9,999

$10,000+

What approximate amount (in dollars) of your graduate enrollment marketing budget is spent on social media marketing?

$0-1,000

$1,001-3,000

$3,001-6,000

$6,001-9,999

$10,000+

What approximate amount (in dollars) of your graduate enrollment marketing budget is spent on social media marketing?

$0-1,000

$1,001-3,000

$3,001-6,000

$6,001-9,999

$10,000+

# Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

**Introduction**

You are invited to participate in a research study regarding the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment. You were chosen as a possible participant because you are a graduate enrollment management professional who belongs to the National Association of Graduate Admissions Professionals (NAGAP) membership. This survey is open to NAGAP members who are responsible for overseeing all decisions pertaining to graduate student recruiting and marketing. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have prior to agreeing to take part in this study.

This study is being completed by Stanley Kania III, a doctoral candidate completing research for his dissertation in the Ph.D Administration & Leadership program at Marywood University.

**Purpose- What the Study is About**

The purpose of this study is to examine the use of social media and e-marketing practices in graduate student recruitment at four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities in the United States.

**Procedures- What You Will Be Asked to Do**

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey. The estimated time to complete this survey is no more than 15-20 minutes. Additionally, you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire which will take approximately no longer than 2-3 minutes to complete.

**Risks and Benefits**

The risks to participants are no greater than ordinarily encountered in daily life.

The benefit to participation in this study is to expand existing knowledge on how social media and e-marketing practices are being used in graduate student recruiting.

**Payments/Rewards**

Respondents to the survey and demographic questionnaire will be entered into random drawing to win a $100 Visa gift card. Two (2) winners will be selected at random with each winner being awarded a $100 Visa gift card. Participants wishing to be enrolled into the random drawing will be asked to supply their contact information after completing the demographic questionnaire.

**Confidentiality**

Responses to this study are anonymous and the researcher will not be able to identify you based on your responses. Only the researcher and members of the dissertation committee will have access to the data, which will be kept in a password protected file. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission of survey responses. Records will be kept for one year and all data will be erased and destroyed thereafter.

**Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you chose to withdraw from the study after completing the survey and questionnaire, simply e-mail the primary investigator: [skaniaiii@m.marywood.edu](mailto:skaniaiii@m.marywood.edu). If you withdraw after completing the survey and questionnaire, you will be withdrawn from the random drawing to win a raffle prize. You may print this consent form to keep for your records.

**Contacts and Questions**

You may ask questions at any time during this study. If you have any questions pertaining to this study, you may contact the primary investigator, Stanley Kania III, at [skaniaiii@m.marywood.edu](mailto:skaniaiii@m.marywood.edu), or the dissertation committee chair, Dr. Alan Levine, at [levine@marywood.edu](mailto:levine@marywood.edu).

If you have questions related to the rights of research participants, please contact Ms. Courene M. Loftus, MPA, CIP, Director of Human Participants Protection and Research Compliance, via phone at 570-963-4782 or via e-mail at [cloftus@marywood.edu](mailto:cloftus@marywood.edu).

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the above information and have asked any questions. I have received answers necessary to participate in this study. I acknowledge that participation in this study is voluntary and that I can withdraw my participation in this study at any time by contacting the primary investigator.

By clicking the survey link below, I acknowledge and I have read and understood the above consent to participate in this study.