Chapter 26

Promotion of Academic Integrity Through a Marketing Lens for Canadian Post-secondary Institutions

Nazanin Teymouri , Sheryl Boisvert, and Katrina John-West

Abstract Although the study of academic integrity has addressed numerous perspectives on how to encourage, teach, and manage student behaviour, little has appeared on how to promote it beyond an educational or cultural lens. Though emphasis in the classroom through teaching is important to an overall understanding of academic integrity, the promotion—specifically through marketing tactics—may offer an entirely new and applicable approach to communication between academic institutions and students. Specific suggestions include gathering data on academic misconduct on a consistent basis, using data for institutional analysis of trends in misconduct so that a tailored approach to addressing specific challenges may be planned, and engaging students through relevant mediums and methods familiar to them.

Keywords Academic misconduct · Relationship marketing · Post-secondary · Higher education

Communicating with students about the importance of academic integrity occurs in a variety of ways, including through course outlines, faculty oral instruction, and via institutional websites, workshops and campaigns. The need to address academic integrity through such a holistic approach is well studied and documented (Bretag et al., 2014; East & Donnelly, 2012). A positive relationship between faculty and students is clearly demonstrated as a factor in how academic integrity is upheld and misconduct is addressed in higher education (Christensen Hughes and McCabe, 2006a). Christensen Hughes and McCabe (2006b) indicate that there is a general

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pervasiveness of misconduct in the Canadian education system from high school to post-secondary graduate programs and that there is a need for further exploration of the challenges relating to upholding academic integrity. Despite general agreement on what actions constitute academic misconduct, differences in opinion between faculty and students on the severity of these behaviours points to a disconnect in perspective that requires bridging (Christensen Hughes & McCabe, 2006b). Overcoming challenges to academic integrity cannot be achieved until there can be an alignment between faculty and student perceptions of not only what is considered academic integrity, but also the severity of different types of misconduct. The most effective way to create an understanding between educators and learners is to build meaningful relationships.

Though academic integrity is a key element in scholarship and education, the way students learn, receive information, and interact with one another has evolved beyond the traditional classroom. Digital tools and cultural diversity have changed the landscape of teaching and learning. The pervasive existence of misconduct across the post-secondary landscape is an indication that simply teaching students about academic integrity is not enough to mitigate inappropriate behaviour.

The focus of this chapter is on the potential of using marketing tactics to strengthen efforts in promoting academic integrity at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is argued that current marketing efforts to recruit students and growing digital trends provide the means to leverage current communication practices for the promotion of academic integrity. Despite the highlighted use of marketing, the aim here is not to facilitate the perception of students as being clients or customers of post-secondary education. Instead, it is to encourage the incorporation of tools beyond the scope of an educational lens that may be relevant to the dynamic and complex challenges related to academic integrity.

To begin, the concept of relationship marketing and how it has evolved is explored. Following, an overview of current marketing efforts by the Canadian government and post-secondary institutions is provided to highlight the resources invested, and expertise demonstrated in the promotion of Canadian higher education. Parallel to a growing emphasis on marketing and communications universities, colleges, and technical institutes have progressively moved an increasing number of programs to online delivery (Bates, 2018). This trend not only offers greater learning options for students, but also broadens the prospect of expanded and diversified modes of communication between institutes and students.

Challenges to academic integrity are both complex and expand into areas beyond a teaching and learning lens. To overcome these challenges, it is necessary to think outside of educational concepts, mobilize the expertise of multiple stakeholders, and explore a range of disciplines relevant to the current environment in which post-secondary institutions operate (Bretag et al., 2014). Relationship marketing offers a space for the convergence of scholarship and operational practices, helping post-secondary institutions to shift towards creating cultures of academic integrity, rather than the more simply endeavouring to manage academic misconduct (Bretag et al., 2014).

Overview of Relationship Marketing

The concept of relationship marketing has been discussed extensively since the 1990s. At a time well before the global ubiquity of connections and interactions through online platforms, marketers already had an acute realization of the benefits to understanding and caring for customers (Buttle, 1996). Buttle frames this as a shift away from a focus on timely transactions between firms and customers to one in which more long-term relationships are sought (1996). Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) elaborate on this trend, describing the long-term value of mutual interdependence and cooperation fostered through relationship marketing practices. They explain that although transactional marketing approaches allow for greater independence and choice for customers, they are heavily based on the self-interest of marketers whose aim it is to maximize their return-on-investment (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

The shift away from a transactional approach has modified the emphasis on the traditional four P's of marketing—price, product, promotion, place—to a focus on customer retention (Buttle, 1996). With this focus, relationship marketing applies to tactics that encourage cooperation, interactive exchanges, and mutually beneficial bonds between actors within the business environment (Ashley et al., 2011; Buttle, 1996; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Of the models and concepts offering ways to optimize marketing efforts, it is particularly effective for achieving long-term, consistent behaviours in targeted groups (Ashley et al., 2011; Buttle, 1996; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

A key element of relationship marketing strategies focuses on the importance of customer retention over attracting new ones (Berry, 2002). Not only is retention important to sales, the practice of maintaining a customer base is a far more efficient allocation of marketing budgets (Berry, 2002). Ultimately, it is more efficient to engage and entice existing customers to continue their patronage than it is to convince new customers to purchase a product or service (Berry 2002). The use of data to develop personalized products and services aimed at meeting the specific needs of customers is one way to achieve this (Berry, 2002; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth, 2002). The greater a company's ability to cater to their customers' needs, the better they are able to differentiate themselves among competitors. However, a key element of successful relationship marketing efforts is the longevity and strength of bonds created between firms and customers (Berry, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). This outcome surpasses the notion of customer retention; thereby, through effective communication and customer satisfaction, companies earn the loyalty of their customers (Abeysekera & Wickramasinghe, 2013; Berry, 2002; Lewin & Johnston, 1997; Zakaria et al., 2018). Customer loyalty not only contributes to profitability but provides a basis from which companies can better predict and influence consumer behaviour (Lewin & Johnston, 1997; Zakaria et al., 2018). Thus, the defining principle of successful relationship marketing is an unwavering attention to customers and clients; whereby, elements of transactional marketing models—focused on the

profitable exchange of goods—are secondary (Ashley et al., 2011; Buttle, 1996; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth, 2002; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

The efficacy of targeted audience-centred approaches to communication practiced by governments to sway public behaviour is well documented (Abroms & Maibach, 2008). This is particularly evident in the management of public health (Abroms & Maibach, 2008). Similar to the efficacy of marketing campaigns aimed to retain customers, “the evidence is fairly compelling that interventions targeting individual-level factors can be a highly cost-effective way to promote population health” (Abroms & Maibach, 2008, p. 227). Also similar to relationship marketing is that in order to effectively and sustainably change public behaviour governments must also address the systemic challenges and barriers that compel individuals to make poor health decisions (Abroms & Maibach, 2008). It is with thorough knowledge of an audience, understanding of their behaviours, and an organizational approach to communication that governments are able to influence public behaviour in areas such as alcohol consumption and tobacco use (Abroms & Maibach, 2008). A company’s approach to promoting a product or service operates through a different lens from that of government communications. However, the importance of knowing a customer and building a relationship with them to influence their choices follows a similar path to changing public behaviour.

Companies that understand their customers improve their ability to differentiate themselves in markets where diversity in products and services is difficult to achieve (Buttle, 1996). This facilitates both the initial attraction of customers and their retention. Modern database management systems, wide access to the internet, and social media provide countless tools for understanding customers more thoroughly than ever before. These tools provide companies with unprecedented insight into their customers’ activities, interests and needs (Abeysekera & Wickramasinghe, 2013; Ashley et al., 2011; Buttle, 1996; Möller & Halinen, 2000; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995; Zakaria et al., 2018). Lewin and Johnston (1997) describe how a focal distribution firm in the lumber industry was able to differentiate itself within the market through a value added, customer service-oriented approach. By understanding their customers and meeting their needs effectively, the firm was able to distinguish themselves from competitors in a market where differentiation is difficult to achieve (Lewin & Johnston, 1997).

Similarly, Abeysekera and Wickramasinghe (2013) highlight the importance of “customer orientation,” described as an understanding of customer behaviour and actions by salespeople as a key element in relationship marketing efforts. They attribute this not only to successful sales and retention, but also as a key element for achieving differentiation among competitors (Abeysekera & Wickramasinghe, 2013). Both global and local businesses that gather and use knowledge of their customers, develop personalized products, and communicate authentically with their customers, benefit from relationship marketing.

The value of customer retention within the banking industry is well documented and has been discussed for several decades (Murphy, 1996). Murphy describes how the use of relationship marketing by financial service providers has risen from the need for banks to differentiate themselves (1996). This combined with

the realization that long-term relationships enhance profitability, made relationship marketing favourable among banks (1996). This is evident in Canada as all five major banks provide services in multiple languages and emphasize their ability to personalize their services to clients' various needs (Canadian Bank of Commerce, n.d.; Bank of Montreal, n.d.; Bank of Nova Scotia, n.d.; Royal Bank of Canada, n.d.; Toronto Dominion Bank, n.d.). Zakaria et al. (2018) also emphasize the value of customer orientation as a means to improving customer satisfaction. This they conclude contributes to both strong relationships and customer loyalty to businesses (Zakaria et al., 2018).

The notion of customer loyalty is particularly important to relationship marketing ventures and is more nuanced than the concept of retention. Retention can be seen as repeated business. In practice, it is a customer's return to a business to fulfill the need for a specific commodity. Loyalty in contrast demonstrates a deeper connection to a business—one that indicates an emotional bond.

Sheth and Parvatiyar explain that "when producers and consumers directly deal with each other, there is a greater potential for emotional bonding that transcends economical exchange" (1995, p. 389). Halimi et al. (2011) echo this notion explaining that loyalty is formed through "communication and personalization" (p.49). This concept aligns with the modern role of companies on social media. Successful firms can no longer focus primarily on advertising to communicate with customers. Instead, a steady stream of positive engagement is necessary for them to stay relevant. Without attention to the online activities of their customers, firms would disappear among the endless stream of digital communication customers and other companies engage in. Though technology has augmented the way firms learn about, interact with and communicate with customers, it remains that in order for them to stay relevant they must diligently focus on and consistently find ways to maintain their relationship with customers.

Möller and Halinen analyze the conceptual framework of relationship marketing as a general theory (2000). Their evaluation concludes that what is described loosely as relationship marketing is a combination of two theories they describe as being either "market-based" or "network-based" (Möller & Halinen, 2000, p. 29). Although Möller and Halinen provide valuable insight into relationship marketing as it relates to other theories within the marketing discipline, their analysis does not imply that there is a risk of reduced benefit for businesses that foster strong bonds with their customers. Rather, they note that the more complex the relationship is between businesses and their customers, the stronger the interdependence between them (Möller & Halinen, 2000). Despite the clear benefits, Ashley, Noble, Donthu, and Lemon explain that certain elements of relationship marketing activities can hinder efforts to build rapport with customers (2011). Programs that create inconveniences, do not provide meaningful benefits, present a privacy risk, or demand too much involvement from customers, are detrimental to creating sustainable relationships (Ashley et al., 2011).

What this indicates is that customer retention may be achieved through the benefits individuals experience from their patronage to a company. Though retention may lead to an increase in profits and market share, its longevity shares a negative correlation

with competitors' ability to differentiate themselves beyond what has temporarily seized the attention of customers in the market. Loyalty implies a greater bond—one that is leveraged by emotional ties—than retention. Developing the emotional ties that lead to customer loyalty is a nuanced, fluid goal that requires consistent attention and positive communication. This is similar to personal interactions where the development of meaningful relationships is founded on authenticity and trust. In order for businesses to achieve this, there must be more than an intention to sell when interacting with customers. However counter intuitive this may appear and despite the absence of a concise theoretical framework, the positive implications of relationship marketing are worthy of attention.

Marketing Canadian Post-secondary Institutions

The promotion of programs and courses is a necessity for universities, colleges, and technical institutes. At a minimum, the information offered through academic calendars is required for students to plan their educational pursuits. Digital communication through websites and social media provides countless ways to reach out to students and to capture their attention. Although all Canadian post-secondary institutions have some form of a digital presence, there is potential to use existing marketing and communication expertise as well as effective modes of connecting with students to leverage the promotion of academic integrity. The emphasis being placed on marketing post-secondary institutions by federal and provincial bodies demonstrates a high level of will and expertise to connect with students.

Although these promotional efforts focus on international enrollment, they highlight the degree to which marketing education can be successful. Data collected for the academic years between 2007 and 2016 by Statistics Canada shows that Canadian post-secondary institutions experienced growth in international enrollment (Statistics Canada, 2020a; 2020b). During this time, though federal and provincial government funding decreased, the overall revenue of institutions increased—a result of increased private sponsorship and income from tuition (Statistics Canada, 2017; 2020a) (See Table 1). The increase in revenue outpaced enrollment across the country (Statistics Canada 2020a, 2020b). This is attributed in part to the significant increase in international student enrollment that accounts for a substantially higher proportion of total tuition revenue compared to that of domestic students (Statistics Canada, 2017).

This financial success is rooted in an unprecedented emphasis on marketing. Canada's latest national strategy for attracting international students includes plans to increase promotional efforts with both funding and sophisticated digital tactics (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). Much of this promotion is through EduCanada in collaboration with provincial governments (Global Affairs Canada, 2019). The Brand-Use Eligibility and Authorization Policy for EduCanada states that only institutions that have met the standards for quality of education may attend federally sponsored events and use its trademarks (EduCanada, n.d.). In order to allow for expanded use of the brand while ensuring the integrity of its standard for quality,

eligibility for participation in and use of the EduCanada brand is largely determined by each institutions' home province (EduCanada, n.d.).

Corresponding to the growth in marketing is the increased digitization of education. A 2017 study indicates that between 2011–2016, online delivery of courses increased by 11% across Canadian institutions (Bates, 2018). This trend continues at a rate of approximately 2% per year (Bates, 2018). The movement towards online delivery of programs runs parallel to the rapid increase of online engagement among youth. A US study indicates that besides increasing engagement in digital communication, some individuals completing grade 12 can be reached effectively and solely through online mechanisms (Twenge et al., 2019). The evolving digital presence of institutions provides for the ideal environment to connect and communicate with students.

Although education remains at the core of post-secondary operations, the way students are drawn to programs has evolved along with the need for revenue generation (Eaton & Goddard, 2008; Guo & Guo, 2017; Marginson, 2002). Marketing and promotion are now a norm in educational discourse (Eaton & Goddard, 2008; Guo & Guo, 2017; Marginson, 2002). Data on revenue and enrollment demonstrates the value of marketing and promotion in maintaining Canada's educational institutions (Guo & Guo, 2017). Though some may resist the adoption of standard business practices within higher education, as complex organizations, the benefits of having a positive global and domestic brand, supported through savvy marketing is undeniable.

The Relevance of Relationship Marketing to the Promotion of Academic Integrity

Data Gathering and Use

A key element of marketing strategy is the collection and use of data. The more an organization knows about their targeted audience, the better they will be able to engage them. This practice is common in marketing but can quickly escalate to breaches of privacy and personal freedom. However, in the case of marketing academic integrity, there is no need to infringe upon students' privacy unless there is a justifiable reason such as is a risk of harm to themselves or someone else. Data gathering and effective targeting can be achieved ethically by several means.

For instance, information regarding cases of academic misconduct can provide insight on trends such as peak times that specific types of inappropriate behaviour occur, or courses prone to higher incidents of cheating. Knowing the timing of increased incidents of misconduct may point to gaps in student supports, instruction, or communication on academic policies. Similarly, awareness of courses indicating a higher rate of misconduct, may provide clues as to where focused attention may be needed, such as improving assessment design. Although this information may

already be gathered by institutions and used by administrators to support students and instructors, institutional analysis of annual trends may provide more comprehensive insight into the factors initiating academic misconduct.

With this information, post-secondary institutions can proactively address challenges to academic integrity. However, organization-wide collaboration would be required for this to be possible. Though the goal may be to promote academic integrity to students, institution-wide communication would be necessary so that specific gaps are addressed. Co-ordination between academic departments as well as divisions responsible for handling cases of misconduct and communications would be necessary to ensure targeted and effective delivery of messages to students. Evidence of a concentrated and consistent effort to achieve this throughout post-secondary institutions is currently not available.

Relationship Marketing Tactics to Encourage Cooperation, Mutually Beneficial Bonds, and Interactive Exchanges

Co-operation, mutually beneficial bonds, and interactive exchanges are key elements of the learning environment. It is through these that students learn, educators teach, and scholarship advances. Through an educational lens, this is how the skills related to academic integrity can be taught. However, from a marketing perspective, co-operation, bonds and exchanges create relationships that foster loyalty to products, services, and brands. It is through loyalty that consumers are drawn to specific commodities. In this way consumer dedication parallels the way a culture guides traditions, habits, and perspectives. Used alongside teaching skills relevant to academic integrity, relationship marketing is one way of enhancing bonds and interactive exchanges within the educational environment between students and institutions.

Although the aim of promoting academic integrity through relationship marketing tactics is not to sell a product or service, actively reminding students of its importance may help to develop loyalty to the concept much like government campaigns to influence public behaviours. Similarly, certain commodities are a part of daily lives that can be discussed on social media and in entertainment, academic integrity must become a part of students' daily life for it to become a part of their culture.

Within the scope of post-secondary education institutional social media accounts can be used to carry out campaigns relating to academic integrity and misconduct. Data from cases of misconduct can be used in messaging to inform students and instructors on trending behaviours. For instance, if there is information that a copy of an assessment is being circulated among students, institutions may alert students that they are aware of the activity and remind students of instructional support to help them avoid cheating. Bringing this type of activity into the forefront of social

media communication allows for conversations to develop, demonstrates a proactive approach to misconduct, and provides students with a reminder that they are supported to behave with integrity by their institutions.

Entertainment such as sports can also be used to encourage discussion about academic integrity. For many institutions sporting events are a source of entertainment and pride. Parallels between cheating in sports and academics can easily be drawn. Sportsmanship and dedication to fair play of athletic teams can be used as a way to demonstrate the importance of integrity within the culture of an institution. Although a sporting event may not be the ideal place to discuss academic integrity, highlighting how integrity in athletics and academics relate to one another through social media and institutional websites may promote positive habits, develop discussion, and integrate academic integrity into the culture of institutions.

Khan et al. (2020) highlight the importance of implementing institution-wide campaigns to raise awareness of academic integrity. With a specific interest in contract cheating, they describe how contract cheating is a social issue that is best addressed by interacting with students through familiar mediums such as social media (Khan et al., 2020). A particularly interesting finding from their study is that students enjoyed the interactions and discussions around academic integrity (Khan et al., 2020). Positive feedback and growth in participation throughout this study indicates the initiation of a mutually beneficial relationship between the institution and students (Khan et al., 2020).

Relationship marketing tactics are as diverse as institutional goals and modes of communication. Simply put, successful relationship marketing campaigns include ways to engage potential consumers through popular and relevant mediums. Although this discussion does not intend to suggest that students must be considered customers within higher education, there are certain proven methods of reaching individuals used by marketers that can be beneficial to awareness campaigns initiated by post-secondary institutions. As seen in Khan et al. (2020), the use of mediums does not have to be complex. Knowing enough about students to reach them through the use of common methods such as posting images and hashtags can have a significant and long-term impact on awareness (Khan et al., 2020). Khan et al. demonstrate that similar to marketing campaigns, attention and concern for students is an effective way to develop loyal relationships with them. Any activity that encourages academic integrity beyond the classroom has the potential to build institutional dedication to it. The key to creating co-operation, mutually beneficial bonds, and interactive exchanges is to highlight academic integrity as an element of institutional culture that relates to student life in positive way.

Conclusion

The management of academic integrity cannot be left to the classroom alone. Despite the efforts of educators to mitigate misconduct, students will face situations that will lead to inappropriate behaviours. Changes in technology and course delivery will

pose new and continuously evolving challenges to upholding the integrity of assignments and assessments. Contributing to these factors, gaps in cultural understanding between educators and learners further complicate the matter.

Although providing supports for referencing and citation skills are an important part of coaching learners to behave appropriately within the educational environment, sustainable management of academic integrity requires a continuous and collaborative institution-wide approach. Where teaching skills provide tools to avoid misconduct, responsive attention to student behaviours, habits, and tendencies will facilitate more effective communication on and promotion of academic integrity. A relationship marketing lens may provide innovative ways to reach, engage, and interact with learners.

The concept of customer retention and influence on behaviour is as relevant to commerce as it is to communication with students in education. Post-secondary institutions and their supporting governmental bodies are already heavily engaged in communicating to students through marketing and promotions. Similarly, colleges, universities, and technical institutions alike are moving increasingly towards online delivery of courses and programs. Most importantly, students are highly engaged in communication through digital means as a way of information gathering and social connection. There is no lack of digital platforms with which to engage students, the technical expertise to do so exists, and marketers have well established methods to understand audiences.

However, the relationship between institutions and their students cannot be confused with that of companies and their customers. Though certain activities and initiatives, such as social media campaigns, taken from marketing practices can be utilized to communicate about academic integrity, certain factors must be considered. The most apparent is that, although consumers look to companies for commodities, students engage with their institutions primarily for their education.

With this comes a notable difference in power dynamics. As consumers, individuals have the power to make choices regarding their purchases and how they interact with companies. In contrast, students do not have the same flexibility in how they approach discussions regarding academic integrity with their instructors and institution. Nonetheless, further exploration in how communication and marketing tactics may facilitate the management of academic integrity may provide new and innovative ways to overcome the challenges faced by post-secondary institutions.

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