MGMT 5120 – Honours Research Project

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Final Honours Thesis

The Development of the Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model

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Abstract

Over the past several decades, higher education in Canada has expanded dramatically. Postsecondary institutions (PSIs) have struggled to both respond to this competitive environment, while simultaneously generating value for its core stakeholders – students – which align with its mission and vision. Comprehending the underlying relational dynamics between a student and their PSI will aid in improving retention rates, satisfaction levels, shared values, advocacy, loyalty, and efficiency overall. The current project will investigate what variables contribute to the creation of relational value between students and a PSI. Relationship marketing (RM) is the theoretical foundation of this study. RM is the principle of establishing, maintaining, and enhancing mutually successful relationships, where value is created for all parties. Previous research was adapted for application in a higher education context to explore the relationship between PSIs and students. Past research conducted has focused on a diverse range of relationships and industries using RM. Spectator affiliations to sports teams, students' affiliation with varsity sports, and student affiliation with education are some examples of RM studies. Herein, we will explore the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI and how this relationship generates mutual value. To do so, we conducted a phenomenological study. This encompassed interviewing a minimum of 12 experts in higher education. The outcome of this study will be a refined higher education relationship marketing model (HERMM) and a suggested quantitative instrument that can be utilized by future researchers.

Introduction

Strive not to be a success, but rather to be of value. –Albert Einstein

Higher education has expanded dramatically in the past century (Bankston, 2011). In Canada, full-time post-secondary institution (PSI) enrollment in 1925 was 24,851 students, increasing to 187,049 in 1965, 694,716 in 2005 and to 1,034,000 in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2009; Wisenthal, n.d.; Universities Canada, n.d.). To meet this demand, the number of degree-granting institutions in Canada expanded from 28 in 1918 to 95 in 2018 (Harris,1976; Universities Canada, n.d.). Concurrent to this, both colleges and polytechnic schools in Canada saw similar growth of both enrollment and institutions (Statistics Canada, 2009).

Research is growing in the field of higher education and how it relates to an individual's affective relationship with their school of choice (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Scholars have begun to explore the relationships students form with their school. The purpose of the current study is to explore the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI and how this relationship generates mutual value. This study will contribute to guiding PSI administrators on how to more effectively and efficiently generate this mutual value.

Statement of the Problem

To date, significant research has explored issues related to the acquisition and retention of students in an American postsecondary context (Miller, 2011; Myers et al., 2016; Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011); however, limited research has explored the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI in a Canadian context.

Significance

A deeper understanding of the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI will guide administrators in higher education on how to more effectively and efficiently generate mutual value (Myers et al., 2016). Creating mutual value can lead to higher student satisfaction (Schertzer & Schertzer, 2004) and higher student retention (Myers et al., 2016). Additionally, strengthening student-institutional relationships offer the longer-term potential of maintaining long-term relationships with these students following graduation, including increased alumni advocacy and donations (Meer & Rosen, 2009). Advocacy and attachment include other significant outcomes of better comprehending the perceptions and intentions of students (Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005). A comprehensive understanding of student – institutional relationships can support PSI reputation and revenue generation. The following review of the literature will increase the understanding of student behaviours and attitudes related to the formation of a relationship with one's school.

Overview

This literature review will start by discussing the theoretical foundation of this research. It is essential to understand the history and nature of RM to develop relational constructs further. Next, RM is also uncovered by understanding how it relates to relational value. This position is then narrowed to value creation in higher education. This is valuable for shaping the literature behind each variable interconnected within the conceptual model developed, so each construct is fully conceptualized, and its significance to value creation is understood. The conceptual HERMM will act as a framework for exploring the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI and how this relationship generates mutual value. The review will conclude with additional sub-research questions and an overall summary of what has been discussed.

Exploring Relationship Marketing

RM is the theoretical foundation of the current study. This theory can be defined as a marketing strategy that involves building, maintaining and developing consumer relations (Agariya & Singh, 2011). However, this is not the only documented definition of RM. RM has received various interpretations over the years (Agariya & Singh, 2011). The relationship approach can be dated back as far as the history of trade and commerce (Finch et al., 2015b). It was documented before the 1980s when individuals were creating long-term relationships while conducting business; this was called "domesticated markets" (Gronroos, 2004). It has evolved from a focus on a transactional approach with consumers to a relational approach (Agariya & Singh, 2011). RM tends to look at maintaining loyal relationships and ensuring the commitment of parties through mutual benefit (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009). Evidence suggests RM has benefits, including providing value for both the consumer and supplier, building long-term relationships, maintaining security and trust, and creating opportunities for reducing costs (Jones et al., 2015). Beck, Chapman and Palmatier (2015) describe how this theory distinguishes PSIs among the competition by having efficient loyalty programs and strong bonds with parties.

There are multiple benefits of RM; however, scholars have noted it can vary in effectiveness depending on the strategies being used (Zhang et al., 2016). Zhang et al. stated the chosen strategy should be selected based on the given situation because RM is dynamic and contextual.

The Systematic Nature of Relational Value

The contention that stakeholder relationships provide intrinsic value to an organization is supported by a broad range of scholars (Aaker, 2004; Gummersson, 2004; Bontis & Serenko, 2008; Kaplan & Norton, 2004; Porter, 2008). However, relationships are an intangible asset whose value

is context-specific, and its value is a direct reflection of a competitor's ability or inability to replicate the advantages that a specific relationship can provide. Relationships also can generate both positive and negative value. Positive value leads to behaviours such as loyalty, whereas negative value can generate disloyalty and negative word-of-mouth.

However, the challenge is relational value is an intangible asset that is highly contextual and based on the interaction among a diverse range of relational variables. Specifically, Kaplan and Norton (1996) argued that effective measurement metrics "should identify and make explicit the sequence of hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships between outcomes and measures and the performance antecedents of those outcomes" (p. 31). Consequently, to understand how relational value is generated between a student and their institution, we must deconstruct the systematic dimensions of a relationship into discreet and measurable variables (Finch et al. 2015b). To do so, we will build on the conceptual model of relationship marketing value developed by Finch et al. (2015b) in figure 1.

Figure 1: A Conceptual Model of Relationship Marketing Value
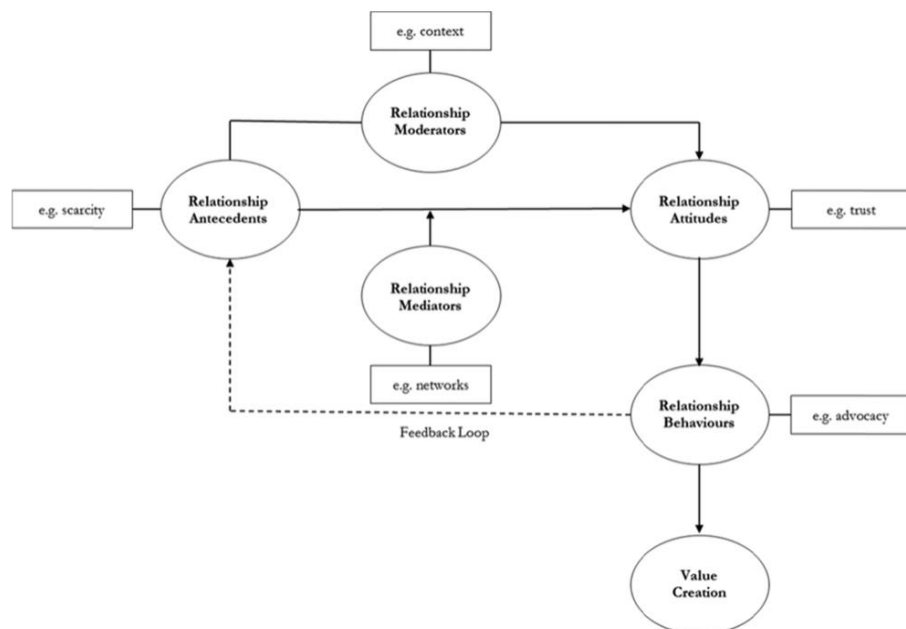
The Finch et al. (2015b) model is framed on defining and deconstructing the linkages between five higher-order relational constructs and how these systems contribute to organizational value. This model incorporates the variables of relationships discussed thus far, such as relational attitudes, relational behaviours, relational moderators, relational mediators and relational drivers such as antecedents. Not only does this model identify the various constructs of value creation among relationships, but it exhibits how each construct interacts with one another and the movement between each variable to develop a lifecycle. These variables in isolation do not provide the full extent of how relationship value is created and functions, so it is integral to look at these functions as a working cycle. Meaning, the variables in the model are all interconnected and work together to create the final result of value creation. The scope of the five higher-order constructs identified by Finch et al. (2015b) will now be reviewed.

Relationship Behaviours

Scholars agree that three dominant behaviours categorize relational value: loyalty, advocacy, and cooperation (Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016; Brown & Mazzarol, 2009; Finch et al., 2015b). Loyalty is a behavioural response to being satisfied within a relationship (Brown & Mazzarol, 2009). Loyalty brings about positive behaviours regarding a relationship and the higher the loyalty, the higher the behavioural outcomes (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009). Advocacy involves individuals who spread word-of-mouth information about a relationship they support (Harridge-March & Quinton, 2009). Cooperation is when one supports the valued goals of a firm or organization (Finch et al., 2015b). These behaviours are discussed and supported by a variety of scholars. These behaviours are intangible assets within a relationship that provide different value than physical assets; they indicate a good relationship built on continuance and value (Chen, Chen, & Wu, 2017). Tangible assets can prove to be inefficient unless united with an intangible

asset since they complement each other (Kaplan & Norton, 2004). However, the same can be said for intangible assets if not appropriately paired to create meaningful relationships (Finch et al., 2015b). For improved decisions, key performance indicators should be kept in mind and associated with relational behaviours (Mauboussin, 2012). Mauboussin (2012) explains that professionals can rely on the wrong statistics and decision-making processes, such as gathering data from only the most available sources.

<div align="center">**Relationship Attitudes**</div>

Attitudes can be defined from a variety of different perspectives, and multiple definitions have been documented among scholars (Finch et al., 2015b). However, a generally agreed-upon matter is that human relationships involve a process of evaluation, which results in either a positive or negative belief (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2015). Attitudes can aid in predicting behaviours, but it has been hard to measure attitudes related to specific behaviours in the past due to difficulties in reliable cause and effect results (Ajzen, 1991). Montano and Kasprzyk (2015) state, to better understand the attitude-behaviour relationship, one should measure the direct attitude to behaviour rather than making the mistake of measuring the attitude toward the object. For example, rather than directly measuring a student's attitude towards sports games, one should measure their attitude related to attending sports games.

Four major relational attitudes include relational trust, relational satisfaction, relational commitment, and relational interdependence (Finch et al., 2015b). Trust is both cognitive and affective, and it influences relationship performance through its impact on views of reliability and expectation fulfillment (Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan, 2015). Many studies of trust have failed to look at this behaviour in its full lifecycle span from early to mature trust. Trust morphs throughout the relationship (Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan, 2015). Commitment requires

confidence in a relationship and the willingness to make sacrifices to maintain it (Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan, 2015). Interdependence involves how partners in a relationship align their values and power structure (Finch et al., 2015b; Griffith et al., 2017). Satisfaction is the fulfillment of expectations, which results in a feeling of happiness (Kasiri et al., 2017).

Relationship Antecedents

Knowing what antecedents are integral to creating valued relationships can help develop processes for running PSIs more efficiently (Miocevic, 2016). Finch et al. (2015b) identified three significant relational antecedents: economic, social, scarcity. Economic relates to financial transactions, social is the similar beliefs and values perceived from a relationship, and scarcity refers to the resources available at a specific moment.

Relationship Mediators

It has been suggested that basing the study of intentions only on behaviours is not sufficient in understanding the true reasoning behind actions (Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003). Therefore, one must also consider the mediators in a relationship. Finch et al. (2015b) state peer networks and media will be the leading mediators for influencing attitudes. The information gathered from these sources will affect how an individual chooses to respond to a given situation.

With the growing use of social media as an information source and discussion community, the internet continues to influence how individuals gather insights and views on institutional images (Siamagka et al., 2015). With the current competitiveness of today's market, it is valuable to understand how the use of media and other mediators can positively be associated with attitudes toward a brand (Siamagka et al., 2015).

The effect of social network mediators on individual perceptions has been similarly discussed. People are in one way or another connected, so their interactions impact future decisions and the successfulness of PSIs (Huggins & Thompson, 2015). To form long-lasting relationships, firms must consider the intertwined networks among individuals and how they can form relationships within these ties (Huggins & Thompson, 2015). That said, sometimes, the social connections among individuals can lead to people leaving relationships rather than staying. Thus, partners must learn how to understand these intertwined networks to impact perception creation about their relationship.

Relationship Moderators

Relational duration and relational intensity are two significant moderators in the creation of value among relationships (Finch et al., 2015b). Brotheridge and Lee (2003) discuss how frequency and intensity have a strong impact on whether emotions exist within a relationship and what types of emotions will exist. Duration refers to the amount of time a relationship has been occurring and evolving (Lee et al., 2015). Behaviours that are stable over time produce attitudes that are more consistent and easier to predict, thus impacting the perception of a relationship (Lee et al., 2015). Long-term relationships are viewed with a more trusting perception. Studies on the duration of relationships have been examined in business to business contexts, but little data has been gathered concerning other relationships (Lee et al., 2015). Understanding the duration and intensity of a relationship is an asset when looking at how bonds are formed and how this impacts future perceptions.

The Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model

Stakeholder relationships and the value they generate for an organization are highly dynamic and contextual. Recognizing this, Finch et al. (2015b) explicitly call for researchers to

refine the contextual dynamics of this model "to isolate the systematic cause-and-effect links (and potential feedback loops) among discrete relational attributes and measures of value creation" (p.189). Based on this, we will first explore the nature of relational value in a higher education context. This analysis offers the foundation to adapt the Finch et al. (2015b) model for a higher education context.

As a first step, we conducted an in-depth search to examine the literature associated with relationship and relational value in higher education. Citation counts were one of the important elements to consider in source choices; however, it was not the only variable considered, and occasionally citation counts had to be sacrificed for relevant newly sourced information or highly contextually important information (Abt, 2000). Overall, variables were operationalized by considering literature in the field, recent literature on the scope and higher education-related literature. With all these crucial facets kept in mind, we deconstructed each higher-order relational construct into specific discrete variables related to higher education. Below each description is a table isolating these discrete variables and the associated supporting literature.

Relationship Behaviours in Higher Education

The relational behaviours individuals exhibit, reflect their current relationship with higher education. Behaviours can determine the attitudes and shape individuals' perceptions of value. Individuals who speak highly about their affiliation with the institution they belong to tend to spread positive word of mouth recommendations (Myers et al., 2016). Ultimately, this can influence the success of a PSI. There is potential for students to act as ambassadors for institutions when they grow a sense of identification with it (Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016). Not only might students promote their institution when attending it, but after graduation, they could go on to continue to support the institution. Alumni members provide PSIs with donations, enrollments,

advocacy, participation (e.g., in mentorship programs, as guest speakers in classes, etc.), and purchases of branded products (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001; Pedro, Pereira, & Carrasqueira, 2018). These members are significant in the outcome of institution revenue, reputation, and the attendance of future students.

Carlson and Donavan (2013) discuss how emotional attachment can create loyalty, resulting in behaviours, such as buying branding products. PSIs need to understand how to develop relationships among their students to grow loyalty. The wearing and buying of school apparel and attendance at varsity games are shown to be connected to identity and brand loyalty (Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011). Survey data collected from varsity basketball games demonstrate a connection between loyalty and attendance at games, including decisions to attend future games (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005). As stated by Myers et al. (2016), the identification one feels towards their school has a substantial impact on whether they continue attending it or not.

Student engagement can be defined as "time and effort students devote to educationally purposeful activities" (Kahu, 2013). Engagement is also seen as a devotion of one's time and energy by investing in certain activities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Students who are more involved tend to be more connected to their institution and feel a sense of community (Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011). Being involved can include a variety of activities such as clubs, student government, sororities and fraternities, sports, recreation centres, and more (Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011; Miller, 2011). A sense of loneliness can be diminished by strong feelings of belongingness, resulting in individuals feeling cared about and committed to their institution (Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins, 2011).

Table 1:

Relationship Behaviors in Higher Education

Attribute	Definition	HE Sample	Sample Literature Support
Advocacy	Advocacy is a supportive behaviour that leads to an individual promoting and positively speaking about an organization. Contributions are made for the good of the organization by the advocate; such as word of mouth support.	Alumni members speaking positively to friends about the university they attended.	Balaji et al. (2016), Stephenson & Yerger (2014), Pedro et al. (2018)
Loyalty	Loyalty is a response to satisfaction in a relationship. Behaviours from loyalty include repeat buying of products and a continued alliance even though there might be other competitive offers.	Student retention.	Brown & Mazzarol (2009), Kim et al. (2011), Trail et al. (2005)
Engagement	Engagement is an individual process that involves the investment one takes to participate in certain activities. It is a dedication of one's time and energy.	A student joining a university club; ski club.	Kahu & Nelson (2018), Elkins et al. (2011), Kahu (2013), Miller (2011)
Alumni	Alumni members are partners with PSIs who can provide financial aid, build enrollments, advocate, volunteer, and fundraise. Alumni support can be increased through the belongingness one feels towards their PSI when they had attended it.	Alumni volunteering at university events.	Meer & Rosen (2009), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Pedro et al. (2018)

Relationship Attitudes in Higher Education

It is valuable to understand the attitudes which are formed among relationships to understand further how value perceptions are developed. Kim, Trail, and Ko (2011) listed trust, commitment and identification as attitudes that assess the strength of one's relationship. Trust helps maintain lengthy relationships (Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011). Identification builds strength in

relationships by helping each party stay committed in times of hardship because of their valued connections (Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011). Perceptions and values of an institution can change depending on their reputation and history (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). For example, if a sports team is playing poorly in one game but is known to have never lost a game, it will affect the way people view the team based on their known performance. Finch, McDonald and Staple (2013) studied reputation in higher education in-depth to understand better what influences institutional marketing. Reputation can serve as a competitive advantage, and one can be categorized based on their ranking among other PSIs (Finch, McDonald, & Staple, 2013). Understanding how individuals view and rank your institution can aid in making evidence-based decisions and promoting yourself effectively to the public. Satisfaction can help determine whether students plan on continuing to be involved in campus experiences, such as recreation programs (Henchy, 2013). Interdependence is the final attitude, and it is different from identification as it means genuinely being aware of the shared beliefs and values in a relationship (Heere & James, 2007). Being interdependent means, you merge yourself with a group and become connected and attached to it. As discussed by Heere and James (2007), if you can form a relationship where the partners feel valued and worthy, it will result in a strong relationship. Once someone is interconnected with a team or group, they are more likely to stay loyal through good and bad situations.

Table 2:

Relationship Attitudes in Higher Education

Attribute	Definition	HE Sample	Sample Literature Support
Trust	Trust morphs throughout relationships and can be both cognitive and affective in nature. It is vital for relational exchanges. Components of trust in this research involve need fulfillment, reliability, reciprocity, goal congruence, and confidence in one's partner.	Students trust in professors.	Kim et al. (2011), Vidovich & Currie (2011)
Satisfaction	Satisfaction encompasses whether or not a partner feels their expectations of the relationship are being confirmed. Performance and outcomes affect the evaluation of expectation fulfillment. Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness and pleasure in a relationship.	Students are satisfied when their school provides a gym.	Trail et al. (2005), Kasiri et al. (2017), Henchy (2013), Myers et al. (2016)
Identification	Identification is when a sense of belongingness results in someone defining themselves in relation to the body they feel is distinctive to their personality. It is an overlap of one's own beliefs and experiences with a group. Individuals categorize themselves into a group to aid in self-defining.	Students feel offended when someone criticizes their school.	Mael & Ashforth (1992), Balaji et al. (2016), Wilkins et al. (2016)
Reputation	Reputation is the impression an organization/group makes on the public about its image over a long period of time. Perspectives are developed based on the expectations and attributes of the organization compared to its rivals. A collective belief is created regarding whether one is perceived as favourable or unfavourable.	Students believe their university basketball team is the best because they have never lost a game.	Etter et al. (2019), Boyle & Magnusson (2007), Sung & Yang (2008)

Commitment	Commitment includes making sacrifices to maintain a relationship and dedication of one's resources. It exists when a relationship is seen as important, so effort must be put into maintaining its endurance.	Alumni donating yearly to their university.	McNally & Irving (2010), Kim et al. (2011), Wilkins et al. (2016)
Interdependence	Relational interdependence involves the commitment of both parties and a balance among the exchange relationship. It is the power structure and equality across a relationship. High interdependence exists when both parties are equally dependent upon one another.	My university depends on me for enrollment and I depend on my university for education.	Miller et al. (2014), Finch et al. (2013)

Relationship Antecedents in Higher Education

The initial views and beliefs formed about PSIs are integral to determining how individuals will later consider and weigh their choice of attending school. Understanding who is and is not interested in your affiliation can aid in decisions concerning recruitment policies and research strategies (Bergerson, 2009). Leeds and DesJardins (2015) state scholarships and awards affect the choice of students when deciding which PSI to attend. Even though the pool of students offered these rewards is relatively low in total, students who don't receive rewards still weigh the costs of food consumption, household consumption, and other monetary variables (Avery & Hoxby, 2004). Access can make decisions to attend schools more complicated, and for many individuals, they cross certain PSIs off their list of choices based on proximity (Bergerson, 2009). Studies have shown the consumer decision-making process is not one of simplicity but one in which the consumer moves through multiple stages to get to a final choice (Briggs, 2006). However, this has proven challenging to test based on the data's complexity (Briggs, 2006). Before students can make an informed choice, they weigh a school's reputation, location, environment and more

(Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Organizations must consider their image and how they present themselves to the public; this display can result in positive or negative emotions from potential members, which will then impact their choice of attendance (Pampaloni, 2010). For example, if one institution is known for its safety while another is known for its violent community, these two images will affect their candidacy in student selection. Scarcity involves a partner's competitive advantage and whether or not they are seen as having a rare resource (Hamilton et al., 2019; Barney, 1991). For example, if one institution can provide a program only offered at their institution, this can be considered a scarce resource and might affect students' decision to attend the school. To properly market one's school within the growing competition and need for funding, PSIs must attract students through academic quality (e.g., rankings), efficient costs, image creation, appearance, graduation outcomes (e.g., labour market outcomes, graduate school offers), and athletics (Han, 2014).

Table 3:

Relationship Antecedents in Higher Education

Attributes	Definitions	HE Examples	Sample Literature Support
Social	Social variables are the extent to which a relational partner is perceived to match one's value systems and beliefs. Having similar morals determines if an individual wants to affiliate with a partner. This is based on mutual goals and reduced risk.	Students and their university both believe in equality rights.	Pampaloni (2010), Schlesinger et al. (2017)
Proximity	Geographical choices are based on location. Proximity is the closeness and distance of a resource, which determines an individual's choice to engage with it. Access affects one's decision to invest in a partnership.	A student chose their university because it is located down the road from them.	Skinner (2019), Bergerson (2009), Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015)

Economic	Financial variables of a situation directly related to one's willingness to engage in a situation. In this context, variables include financial aid, tuition, and rewards. Individuals analyze economic transactions and evaluate how it will affect their economic self-interests.	Students provided a scholarship from their university.	Kim et al. (2009), Leeds & DesJardins (2015), Skinner (2019)
Scarcity	Rare resources give the partner's a competitive advantage, and it makes them more valuable in a relationship. Scarcity is the perceived access to resources that a relational partner will bring that an alternative partner could not.	There is only one university that provides the program a student desires; sports marketing degree.	Hamilton et al. (2019), Marginson (2011)

Relationship Mediators in Higher Education

When students are choosing which institution to attend, they are influenced by multiple channels such as parents, media, events, and networks. Students' relationships with their parents can shape the beliefs they hold toward higher education sources (Pampaloni, 2010). This is why the programs and messages PSIs promote should not only consider student values but also parent's values (Myers & Myers, 2012). Parents are actively involved in their children's lives and decisions through guidance, advice, expertise, and, at times, experience with the institution themselves. The internet provides an array of information for users to evaluate, and it can work as a network to connect people with those who have had similar experiences (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). Social media has the potential to provide prospective students with valuable information so they can form strong perceptions of an institution (Constantinides & Zinck Stagno, 2011). If PSIs capitalize on social networks, their reputation, student pool and resources would be able to positively grow (Hayes, Ruschman, & Walker, 2009). Specifically, Hayes, Rushman and Walker (2009) discuss networking on institution media platforms as a way to shape the public's belief

about their PSIs. When PSIs hold large events such as seminars or open-houses, these meaningful interactions form the initial impressions students hold about the institution (Fischbach, 2006). These events allow postsecondary schools to gain control of how they communicate with students, create brand engagement, and form bonds by bringing everyone together (Altschwager, Dolan & Conduit, 2018).

Table 4:

Relationship Mediators in Higher Education

Attributes	Definition	HE Example	Sample Literature Support
Media	Media provides an array of information to the public, as well as a social platform for individuals to interact and communicate opinions.	A news article posts about a universities new and innovative library.	Peruta & Shields (2018), Constantinides & Zinck Stagno (2011)
Networks	Networks include individuals that affect one's decision making and behaviours, such as family and friends. Networks are interpersonally connected and have common interests. Networks help provide guidance and information for individuals when evaluating relationships.	A potential student has parents who attended the university and loved their experience.	Kao & Tienda (1998), Tinto (1975), Pampaloni (2010), Myers & Myers (2012), Okerson (2016), Hayes et al. (2009), Calvo-Armengol et al. (2009)
Event	Relational partners can hold and participate in a variety of events to create meaningful interactions and shape impressions. Events provide an experience to partners to emphasize their best characteristics.	University open-houses.	Okerson (2016), Fischbach (2006), Johnston (2010)

Relationship Moderators in Higher Education

There is a variety of other variables that affect the strength of a relationship between a student and their PSI. Studies have connected the relationship between school proximity and

parental income. Lower-income households have shown to have students choosing closer schools (Mattern & Wyatt, 2009). Additionally, women generally prefer to stay closer to home than men. However, these studies' validity should be considered as skewness was an issue. Some students showed to be very opposite to the general population. Women have also been documented to be more influenced by the costs of studies than men and less impacted by future earnings when choosing a PSI (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Students' confidence in higher education has been documented to begin to wither due to the high costs and low perceived outcomes (Fischer, 2011). Students on the lower-income scale can foster doubt about whether higher education is worth it, which is why providing valuable information to the public is ever more critical for institutions. The probability of student attendance at a PSI increases with the opportunity to receive loans or grants (Kim & Gasman, 2011). Students who came from backgrounds of elite high-schools were more likely to apply to select institutions based on the opportunities their parents and schools had provided them for their future (Kim & Gasman, 2011). The decision to attend individual institutions could be deeply rooted in tradition and upbringing, so individuals might feel obligated to follow specific educational paths (Kim & Gasman, 2011). However, the research by Kim and Gasman (2011) only focused on Asian American students, so the results could be skewed to that particular diverse group. Individuals shown to be more mature in age made higher education decisions based on a variety of information and sources (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Depending on where individuals are in their life, it affects if they attend school for self-growth, change or other reasons (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Depending on lifestyle and personality characteristics, individuals' institutional information needed for decisions will vary (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Some like course and program varieties, and others want valuable facts about sports life at a school (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015).

Table 5:

Relationship Moderators in Higher Education

Attributes	Definition	HE Example	Sample Literature Support
Contextual Factors	Contextual factors are characteristics of a specific setting that determine its outcome. Factors in this context include age, gender, household income, and student debt.	Student requires loans to attend university.	Mattern & Wyatt (2009), Jorgensen et al. (2017)
Duration	Duration is a time component that measures how long a relationship is ongoing. Intensity is the frequency component of interaction in a relationship.	A student has been attending the same university for four years.	Schlesinger et al. (2017), Hawkins et al. (2013)

Based on the above comprehensive review of the literature of relational value in higher education, we adapted the Finch et al. (2015b) model into the Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model (HERMM).

Figure 2: *Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model*
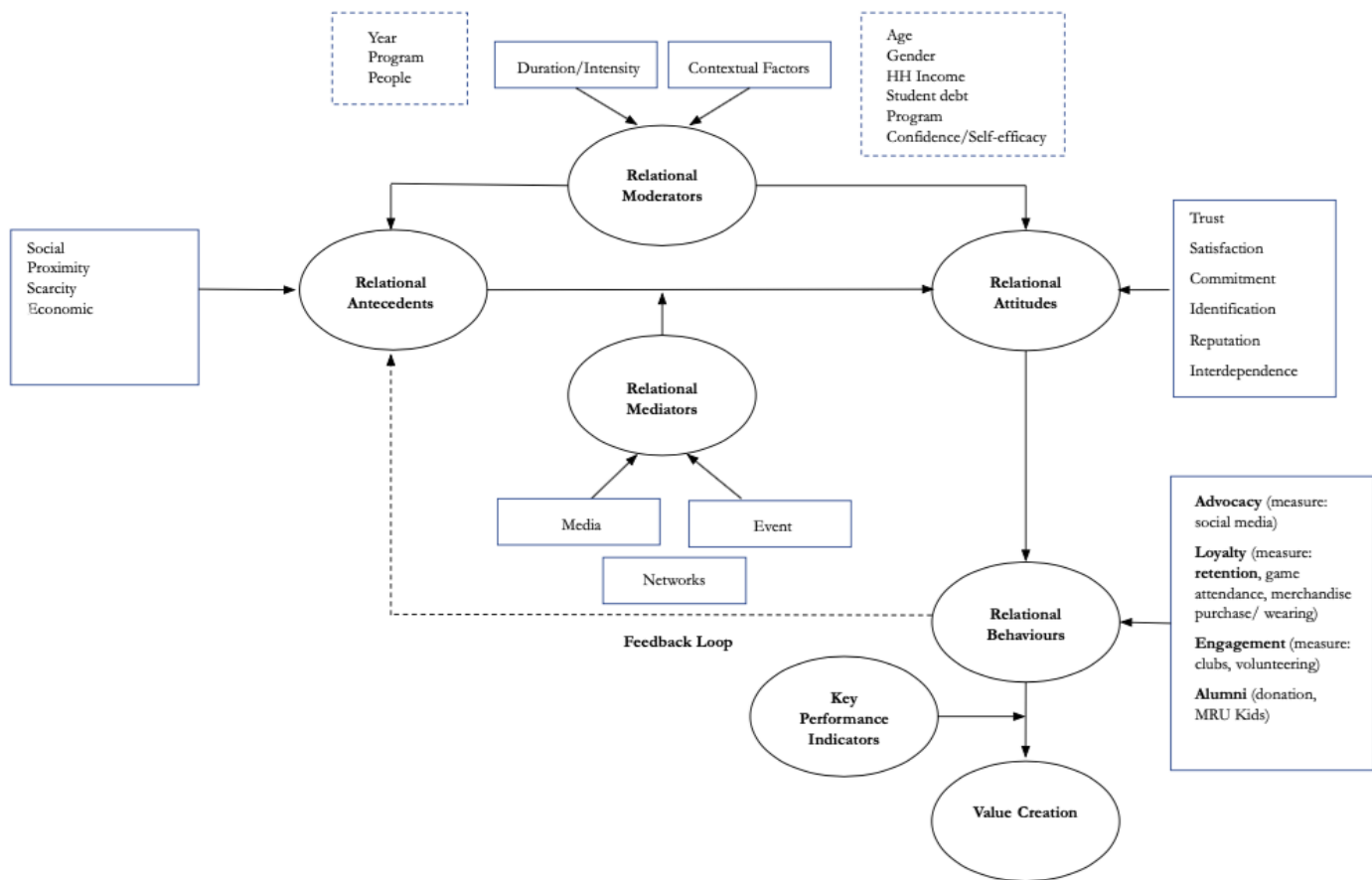
Research Question

The conceptual HERMM provides a strong base for the exploration and creation of the following overall research question:

What variables contribute to the generation of relational value between students and their postsecondary institution?

After defining the overarching research question of this study, it is essential to identify specific sub-questions further to be explored:

RQ1.   What variables contribute to the formation of a students' relational attitudes in higher education?

RQ2.   What are the sources of value that drive a student to seek a relationship with a postsecondary institution?

RQ3.   What are the variables that moderate students' relational attitudes with a postsecondary institution?

RQ4.   What are the variables that mediate students' relational attitudes with a postsecondary institution?

RQ5.   What variables contribute to a students relational behaviour towards a postsecondary institution?

RQ6.   What are the variables that impact key performance indicators of a post-secondary institution?

Assumptions and Limitations

The theoretical approaches being used for this study are well documented and cited, such as RM. Issues do not arise with the theories but rather the methodological approaches. Studies have typically gathered participants from a particular degree of education. Kwon, Trail and James' (2007) research on purchase intentions of team licensed apparel collected data only from students enrolled in sport management courses. Lindsey and Sessoms (2006) conducted their study of campus recreation programs using only participants enrolled in the Department of Physical Education and Health. These approaches could provide a non-representative sample by segregating students of other degrees. Different views on school aspects could arise from students enrolled in

various programs. Studying individuals from only a specific program might skew the results of the study by gathering only one perspective from a large pool of postsecondary students.

Literature Review Summary

RM offers a robust interdisciplinary foundation to explore the relationship between a student and their PSI and how this relationship generates mutual value. Based on this RM foundation, we leverage literature examining the relational value in higher education to develop the conceptual higher education relationship marketing model. Refining and operationalizing this model will offer a framework for PSI administrators to more effectively and efficiently explore the nature of relational value in a higher education context. In the following section, we will review the proposed methods to refine and operationalize HERMM.

Methodology

A phenomenological methodology was used to refine, develop and to measure the systematic nature of relational value in higher education. Phenomenological research involves qualitative methods of inquiry in a single research initiative. The value of phenomenological research is that it allows researchers to leverage multiple perspectives from several individuals to profoundly understanding a phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

The interviewer conducted phenomenological interviews with a broad range of experts in the area of relational value in higher education. The goal of the phenomenological research was to identify common themes associated with the interviewees. The outcome of the phenomenological study will contribute to the refinement of the conceptual HERMM.

Phenomenological Interviews

Phenomenology interviews were selected to support the refinement of HERMM as it enables multiple perspectives to emerge from their unique background and experiences (Creswell, 1998). Finlay (2009), describes the phenomenology process as interactive and adaptive to enable us to explore the depth of the phenomena under study. For the phenomenological interviews, we adopted a multi-stage process based on Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) and Moustakas (1994):

Stage 1: Conduct in-depth interviews

Stage 2: Transcribe data

Stage 3: Review final interviews (both transcripts and audio).

Stage 4: Conduct post-structural analysis and identify composite themes

Stage 5: Provide findings to participants for review to confirm the validity

Population

Qualitative research can provide significant value. We chose purposeful sampling to ensure a diverse representation of expertise. The expert population included individuals working in recruitment, sports and recreation, student advising and alumni relations in PSIs. This group provided diverse insights on relational dynamics from both an institutional and student perspective, including what information and guidance students seek, and how postsecondary are responding to these needs.

Sampling

Qualitative research is more concerned about relevance rather than randomness and representativeness (Horsburgh, 2003). Thus, the sample must be able to sufficiently provide the

relevant information needed to understand the situation the individual is reflecting on. Therefore, purposive sampling allowed us to target participants who possess the knowledge and insight required to investigate the phenomenon (Horsburgh, 2003). Moreover, it enabled us to select participants from different institutional contexts. As a result, this study selected experts who provide a particular perception of relational value in higher education. In doing so, we stratified our sample based on experts from three different institutions, representing three distinct categories of PSIs as defined by Statistics Canada (2009). There are three categories considered in the scope of this study. The first category is a research-intensive university that is a member of a formal association of the leading research-intensive universities in Canada. This university offers a wide range of degrees, including doctorates. The secondary category includes a teaching-intensive undergraduate university whose stated core mission is education. This university offers four-year degrees and offers no graduate programs. The third category consists of a polytechnic whose purpose is the development of employable skills. This school offers certificates, two-year diplomas and a limited number of four-year degrees. In total, four in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals from each category, for a total of 12 interviews. This approach exceeds the minimum group size of ten recommended by Creswell (2009) for phenomenological research.

To recruit the candidates, we identified candidates through a search of the respective institutional staff on their website. Once a candidate was identified, we invited the candidates through email and followed up with a telephone call. This was an iterative process until a minimum of 12 candidates, stratified by the three categories of institutions, had been confirmed. Refer to Table 6 for the sample profile.

Table 6:

Sample Profile

Interviewee #	Department	PSI Category
1.1	Alumni Relations	Teaching-intensive
1.2	Student Advising	Teaching-intensive
1.3	Director of Athletics	Teaching-intensive
1.4	Recruitment	Teaching-intensive
2.1	Student Advising	Polytechnic
2.2	Alumni Relations	Polytechnic
2.3	Recruitment	Polytechnic
2.4	Director of Athletics	Polytechnic
3.1	Alumni Relations	Research-intensive
3.2	Recruitment	Research-intensive
3.3	Student Advising	Research-intensive
3.4	Director of Athletics	Research-intensive

Questions

A semi-structured and open-ended interview plan was created for interviewing all participants to promote maximum opportunity for participants providing their perceptions. This structure allowed us to get the most out of participant answers by giving individuals room to offer their thorough perspective. This structure is less limited to simple and constricted answers because it allows open responses.

Various themes for the interviews were identified that would best provide validity to the research propositions. Some themes included participants' expertise in the research subject, participant's perception of how stakeholders can impact institutional performance, and review and feedback on the conceptual model. The HERMM was introduced to participants in the interview

but not until later in the process of questions. This was to avoid the bias of the interviewee's perceptions. Appendix 3 includes the full interview protocol.

Data collection

Face-to-face interviews were conducted as this is preferred in phenomenological studies to minimize misinterpretation (Creswell, 1998). Participants were given the choice of where the interview is conducted, so it was their preferred location. Responsibility was also placed on the interviewer for audiotaping interviews, transcribing, and writing the report. The interviews were, additionally, scheduled for 60 minutes. Appendix 6 contains the modified consent forms.

Data analysis and coding

The analysis portion of the study was conducted based on scholars' recommended processes. Transcripts and audio recordings were reviewed for verbal and non-verbal themes (Ivey & Ivey, 2007). The data continued to be analyzed by using the strategy of horizontalization for phenomenological studies. Horizontalization is significant as it removes repetitive and unnecessary statements, which allows for central themes to come to light (Creswell, 1998). Statements that reflect and explore the perception higher education value creation were focused on. This process requires the interpretation of data, so we had to be wary of bias not to compromise the data. After central themes from statements were explored, the themes were then categorized into structural descriptions to show the connection of statements from all the interviews. Open coding was additionally used to convert qualitative research into quantitative data (Creswell, 1998). This process involved coding data by pinpointing the dominant themes from the interviews and then linking the themes to one or more keywords. The full transcripts were then analyzed to code the use of keywords by participants. Once the transcripts were coded, the data across all

interviews will be compared. Quantifying the phenomenological research through this analysis process allowed us to relate themes from participant interviews to quantitative results.

Relation to the overall study

The phenomenological research allows for adjustments to be made to the HERMM. This will also support the future proposed instrument design and model validation.

Measures to Protect Participants

Any study researching with human participants must ensure a high level of respect for individuals' privacy, confidentiality, and rights. Before conducting this study and interviewing and surveying participants, approval was received from the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) and no data collection was conducted without this approval. To further protect the participants during the qualitative research, the following methods were assumed (Creswell, 1998):

1. All participation was voluntary, and there was no pressure to participate from any third-party. Voluntary participation was stated in all communication with the population group.

2. All participant names were kept confidential and detached from specific survey responses; therefore, it is impossible to connect a specific respondent to a specific survey.

3. All data were password protected on a computer hard drive.

4. All data will be kept for five years and then destroyed.

Summary of Methodology

This section rigorously investigated the methodology of the study. It presented an overview of the research design and rationalized the choice of utilizing a phenomenological study as the most effective research method. Targeted populations, data collection techniques, and data analysis were also discussed in depth. Now that the background of literature has been reviewed, the theoretical framework has been presented, and the methodology has been investigated, a discussion on the interpretation of findings and limitations can occur.

Findings

This study used phenomenological research to investigate what variables contribute to the creation of relational value between students and a PSI. This section will examine the results of the qualitative research. Additionally, this section includes details on the data collection process and data analysis. The results are guided by the variables discussed within the HERMM, such as relational antecedents, relational mediators/ moderators, relational attitudes, relational behaviours, and key performance indicators.

Data Collection and Analysis

The phenomenological research utilized participant experience and expertise in the higher education field to support the refinement of the HERMM. This method of research allowed us to gather deep insights into higher education expert opinions and experiences.

The interviews were conducted from June to August 2019. Twelve interviews were conducted at this time. Eleven of these interviews were conducted face-to-face, and one interview was conducted over the phone based on interviewee situational circumstances. The interview format consisted of a variety of open-ended questions surrounding higher education relational value, and a semi-structured interview format was utilized (see Appendix 3). Each interview took

approximately 60 minutes to conduct. Each interview was transcribed to text using the application Otter.ai, and then the transcriptions were reviewed again manually for accuracy.

Once the research was transcribed and reviewed again for accuracy, the researcher went through a multi-step process of data analysis to uncover common themes and discoveries from interviewee responses. Multiple techniques, such as reviewing for verbal and non-verbal themes, horizontalization, and open coding, were used to ensure credible and reliable findings (Creswell, 1998; Ivey & Ivey, 2007).

The data analysis process began by reviewing each audiotape and its corresponding transcript. This allowed the researcher to start identifying meaning-units among the interviews. These meaning units were then highlighted and categorized manually based on their content. The categories of meaning units were then placed in charts and further grouped to create themes. Moustakas (1994) describes themes as "invariant constituents," and we will refer to these as parent themes. After completing the categorization of themes, a total of 56 parent themes were identified. As part of the theme identification, the context of each term was explored to ensure accuracy in meaning categorization. Words can be used in many different circumstances, so the analysis aimed to reduce the risk of misconstruing meanings. Reviewing each audiotape individually aided this process of identifying the context in which identified terms were used.

The researcher then went through a process of reduction to remove overlapping themes. This step must be done with care to maintain the participant's contributions (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, a duplicate document of the original themes was stored, and content being removed was tracked on this document version. The researcher utilized horizontalization to eliminate repetitive and irrelevant statements to make main themes evident (Creswell, 1998). After this reduction process, a total of 32 parent themes were identified. The researcher continued to use

horizontalization to ensure proper themes were highlighted. Data was explored that related to value creation in higher education and descriptions were written on each parent theme that showed the overall connection from data among interviews. This allowed themes to be further reduced, resulting in 17 parent themes. After the reduction process was finalized, the researcher returned to the original documents to ensure no essential themes or meanings were lost while compressing overlapping themes.

Once the 17 themes were identified, the researcher participated in open coding. Open coding is the final step to confirm and triangulate data from several sources (Creswell, 1998). This consisted of searching keywords of themes across all interview transcripts and counting how often a theme was brought up. For example, "community" was mentioned by 12/12 participants. This process allowed the researcher to verify the 17 parent themes and recirculate to ensure interviewee responses were not misconstrued along the way. This process also allowed the researcher to turn qualitative data into quantitative results.

Using these various strategies, the researcher was able to produce reliable and credible themes. The 17 themes identified represent experts in the higher education field lived experience and opinions.

Discussion of Themes

The review of the phenomenological themes will be structured in the order of the HERMM six research questions.

What are the sources of value that drive a student to seek a relationship with a postsecondary institution?

The various drivers to attend a university became a common theme among participants. Participants had many beliefs about what drives a student to want to come to a university and stay.

This theme was triggered by the question "Think of the diverse students that attend your institution - What motivates or drives them to want to have a relationship with your school?", "What does your school do specifically to satisfy these drivers?" and "What issues do you think most influence your students' perceptions?". Social, proximity, economic, and scarcity were derived as the four main antecedents for driving students to attend a PSI in the HERMM. This was based on compiled research throughout the literature review and the Finch, O'Reilly, Hillenbrand, and Abeza (2015) conceptual model. Through the phenomenological research, proximity, economics, social, and scarcity were all identified among participants as a theme relating to students' drive to attend PSI. The responses from participants highlighted four parent themes, shown in Table 7.

Table 7:

Relational Antecedent Themes

Parent Themes
1. Location, Location, Location.
2. Financial Influence.
3. Interpersonal Relationships.
4. Importance of Community.

Theme 1: Location, Location, Location. Research uncovered that university location is a contextual factor impacting students. Participants discussed location, and that where a student lives, it will strongly influence their decision to attend a university. Literature supports these claims by describing that access is a factor too many students in deciding what school to go to, and many students cross a PSI off their list based on geographic proximity (Bergerson, 2009; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). It was discussed often based on your context, and where you live, you will gain a different perception of your university. The topic arose that where you live also affects

how you receive information about a university. For example, if you live internationally, many participants said you would gain more knowledge from media channels online, and this could impact decisions. A local student might have more access to information outlets through networks in the community. Participants identified location as a large concern for students, and some participants brought up housing in different locations as an aspect impacting choice or how far the university is located from them. This might be a topic of interest for individuals in recruiting in sports when trying to understand how to reach different populations. Location is one source of value that drives students to seek a relationship with a postsecondary institution. 7/12 participants discussed this theme. The quotations below reflect the impact location can have on student decisions:

Participant 1.1:

But the majority of our students already live in Calgary. So we don't need to do these kind of cross country recruitment drive.

Participant 2.4:

But I think the average student that's here in Calgary's always got some type of insecurity about their housing relationship, or there seems to be a lot of pressure on them to get it right. You know, this is too expensive, or you could save money here. Or if you lived close to the C train, you'd be saving all this money.

75% of our [institution] students come from Calgary. 25% come from somewhere else. And so you're constantly selling your city and selling your campus. So you're talking about transfers and jobs and things like that...housing is an issue, not everyone can buy a house, they're renting. So there's this thing called rent faster.ca or something like that. So you're, you're promoting stuff to students to help them make the decision to choose Calgary.

Participant 3.2:

Well, I think because the [institution] is largely like, homegrown, the post-secondary institution is changing, it's becoming more and more international, that a lot of those perceptions have been formed by just through the presence of the university in the greater Calgary community, right. Alumni who have been here and have spoken about it. And just like, I think that's largely it, international, I think more and more importantly, today. You know the digital campaign and website are, that's how people are shopping. Yeah. So if

they're not from Calgary, and they haven't already decided that they're applying here, you know, you have to have a strong online presence, particularly internationally.

Theme 2: Financial Influence. Higher education economics impacts student perceptions of a university. Participants saw economics as another factor influencing a student's decision to attend university. This was related to funding the university gets and what clubs are supported, the high prices of tuition and books, the need for scholarships, and if the student felt like they were getting their money's worth for the value provided. Leeds and DesJardins (2015) state scholarships and awards affect the choice of students when deciding which PSI to attend. This was similarly discussed in interviews and how students value scholarships and assistance when choosing institutions. Also previously discussed was how students have become less confident in higher education institutes due to high costs and low perceived outcomes (Fischer, 2011). This literature further supports discussions around economics from participants. Participants discussed the need for students to feel like they are getting their values worth at school and often, new students are shocked by high prices. This theme brought up a fascinating insight into how if a student has a bad experience with funding and scholarships, they might associate those negative feelings with the school specifically. For example, if a student is having a bad experience with loans or grants getting disbursed, they might associate these feelings with an institution. Universities must consider how outside funding has an impact on their institute. The quotations below reflect participants view of economics on student opinions:

Participant 1.4:

So during the Com. presentations, I probably spend like 15, 20 minutes talking about, yeah, funding and how to pay for it and where you get the money. And, and it's, it's, I guess, like, I can't fault them, because why would they know, but definitely, like, it's quite shocking to students. Like, I have to pay for this. And like, you make me pay for books and like what? Yeah, so definitely, sort of when you tell them the realities of it, that that brings on the questions.

Participant 2.4:

And then when it comes to scholarships, you know, they're trying to figure out what they can afford or what they can get. So usually a student is from a small urban place, and they might be getting more money, right?

Participant 3.1:

I think sometimes funding is a big one, so, you know, whether or not they've received scholarships, or felt that there is value in the money they've put into their education.
I think it can often, you know, or, or if there's a negative experience with funding. So it could even be student loans, which is not specific to the institution, but that can kind of bleed into the institutions, and sometimes it's those contextual pieces you were talking about earlier.

Theme 3: Interpersonal Relationships. This theme surrounds university programs and how they are connected to building interpersonal relationships. Programs and their classes were often brought up with 8/12 participants discussing the impact of programs on student drivers. A unique topic surrounding programs that were brought up by participants was its social aspect. Smaller class sizes were seen as building communities and friendships and were preferred, while large classes can be seen as less favourable. This connects to the drive to have one on one time with professors and classmates to gain interpersonal connections with one's university. For example, smaller class sizes were seen as building communities and friendships, while large classes of 300 or more people can be less favourable. This can be tied to the need for relationships to have an interpersonal aspect and connectivity. The scarcity of a program came up, so this related to what a university could over via programs. Applied learning was also brought up by which focused on the hands learning experiences students could get from a university and how students value this. Below are responses surrounding participants view of programs:

Participant 1.1:

They actually identify primarily with their program of study, or even [institution] generally. And so like, I think, the experience that that program has given them in their classrooms, and everything is a big driver of whether or not they view us positively or not.

Participant 1.4:

Like you, you have like, engagement is kind of enforced upon you, I find. Because you have like, I don't know, 20, 25 people 30 in a class. So it kind of is reverting you back to high school in the sense that Okay, these are my people that have to spend a lot of time with so I might as well get to know them.

Participant 2.1:

Yeah, but they do love that aspect of one on one and very applied education. They seem to be more engaged when it's something of that subject matter that they want to learn about.

And they liked sort of the more smaller environments. When students used to tell me that they preferred smaller class sizes, I didn't truly understand what they were talking about. And then until I started having conversations with some of them, as much as we say, they really love that experience of being able to go to talk their instructor or professor, rather than sitting down in a 300 room classroom.

Participant 2.2:

So it definitely depends on your personal situation and what your needs are, I think, I think the structure of classrooms, that'll definitely change, like I said, a lecture hall versus a small classroom that some if you're wanting a career in academia, or you just really you learn by listening, yeah, that might be the way you go versus like, no, I need to touch and feel.

I think that a lot of students say they choose to come here because they can't sit in a lecture hall. And so this gives them the opportunity to learn in a bit of a different way, smaller classrooms kind of similar to [institution], I went there as well, that makes a big difference for people who need that, be able to ask questions and to touch and feel and to try.

Participant 3.4

Yeah, I do think that there's a strong tie to how they're progressing through their degree, and the experiences that they're actually having in the classroom, right, because that's first and foremost, that's the reason why they're at university, or in post-secondary. So if the, if their academic pathway seems to not be meeting the expectations that they had, or the standards that they set for themselves, that's where I think we started seeing some dissatisfaction. So again, I think it's just that understanding and awareness of what your program looks like. And knowing that, yeah, when you get into third and fourth year, you're going to have classes of 8-10 to 15 people, but first year, you're going to have classes of a couple hundred, and you have to be okay with that, you have to know that. Or else you will come back and say, Hey, you know what, my expectations weren't really being met, I thought it was gonna have small class my first year.

Theme 4: Importance of Community. Research uncovered that community in higher education is anchored to creating a sense of belonging. Community arose as the most prominent topic among respondents. Every interviewee (12/12) discussed the community in their responses. It was explained that for students to have a positive experience in university, they need to connect with other people and build friendships. It was also stated this sense of community would help maintain a long-term connection with students. If universities satisfy this drive for community and belonging, they were seen as more successful in gaining students. Below is a selection of comments surrounding community:

Respondent 1.2:

That's a tough one, what motivates them to want to have a relationship, I think it's what's got to come down to people, so if they enjoy the people and enjoy being here. I think it's part of that asking thing and connecting, having people pulled. So it's a push-pull thing.

Respondent 1.3:

Because of the diversity, I think they need to feel a sense of belonging here. To them want to be doing something here.

Respondent 2.1:

But if you're able to just show kindness, and talk to students, and, you know, I've been invited to student's birthday parties. So I mean, that sense of community that means that you know, you have a positive impact to some sort of their life, right. Yeah. And so, we all need that sort of attachment of, you know, personal relationship.

Respondent 2.2:

I think the people who find their experience, the most rewarding were the ones who realized, even though it's hard, schools hard, and like studies are hard, that I'm actually going to do better if I get involved in these other areas and feel like I'm part of the community. So community building is so huge, and that that's from student to graduate. That's also what I try to do. My job is to build community amongst our grads, so we're supporting one another as well. And we feel like we're part of something that connection, that human connection.

Respondent 2.4:

But if you can help a student make a friend right away, you really increase the odds of them staying in your institution staying as part of the cohort, but also doing well. So. So we do a lot of things on purpose where we bring people together, we create little social environments where people change teams, cheer for other people."

Respondent 3.1:

So I think community in higher education, so on campus, in particular, just makes the overall experience more positive. So having that, that the network of people that you can go to if you are encountering a barrier of some sort is really valuable. And that's what you have when you have a community, you have people that you can relate with, or go to if you have problems.

But yeah, from an alumni engagement perspective, that's my goal is to maintain that community that was here while you're on campus, and provide the venues for you to continue that relationship in association with the institution, so that we can see the benefit thats had and tell that story.

Respondent 3.3:

I think they're really looking for a sense of belonging and community. And so even from a like a recruitment perspective, if we can sell that to them, to say like, this is the community that we can provide and the support that we can provide and this is how you belong in our community I think students are really looking for that, at least from my interpretation

What are the variables that mediate students' relational attitudes with a postsecondary institution?

Mediators relate to how students receive information about a university. It was mainly discovered through the question, "How do you think your students form their initial perceptions about your school? Is it through primarily direct interaction, mass media, or friends and family members?". It was also brought up in other instances throughout the interview. Throughout the literature review, the primary relational mediators for higher education were identified as media, networks, and events. Networks and media were highly discussed among participants while events were still touched on but appeared as a less prominent mediator. Parents were a strong topic of discussion that relates to the network mediator. Ultimately, these themes helped aid the

understanding of research question three. Two parent themes were brought up surrounding mediators displayed in Table 8 below.

Table 8:

Relational Mediators Theme

Parent Themes

1. Mediation channels are driven by personal connections.
2. Parental influence.

Theme 1: Mediation channels are driven by personal connections. Participants identified various ways universities get the word out about their institution, such as events, networks, and media. This theme was highly discussed, with 12/12 participants bringing it up. Participants mentioned networks such as personal recommendations as a way for students hearing about a university. This topic means hearing from a person who has lived through the university experience and has real examples of their time there. Participants also discussed friends and family word of mouth. This can be related to personal recommendations as well, but this factor was often considered in terms of family and friend's opinions and influence. High school interactions arose as an interesting mediator relating to both networks and events. Respondents identified that high school as a valuable way to get information to prospective students. Recruiters often go to universities and hold events that allow for face to face interaction with students. This also allows for information to be told about the university and the questions asked. Fischbach (2006) discussed the idea of informational event impacts by stating when PSIs hold large events; those meaningful interactions shape the initial impressions students hold about the institution (Fischbach, 2006). Teachers and administrators were identified as essential networks at highschools as they often choose what information they want to tell students about the university and recommend certain

institutions to students, ultimately affecting their attitudes. Media opportunities such as utilizing alumni stories online and social media were seen as an effective way to influence student perceptions. Similarly, literature reflected on how social media is growing as an information source and how the internet continues to influence how individuals gather insights and views on institutional images (Siamagka et al., 2015). It is also believed that with the current competitiveness of today's market, brands should understand how the use of media can be used to associate meanings for consumers (Siamagka et al., 2015). These factors all exhibit the importance of building a strong brand and making an impact. If a student has a good experience at their school based on the many factors impacting their time, they will then go on to share this experience and potentially aid in someone new attending the school, and the cycle continues. Below are quotations related to how students receive information about a university:

Participant 1.2:

I think school counselors too have favorite institutions. And so they end up, you know, encouraging students.

Participant 2.2:

And so in order to bring up the next wave of students, we really want to create those connections. That's a big a sense of community. There are ambassadors, you know, they're walking ambassadors, they're the ones that are able to give a testimonial of what [institution] has done in and speak to it in terms of their success, and how it helped launch their career. We have a lot of alumni who say, particularly in Calgary, who say that say it was a big part of that stepping stone. So that helps in that includes everything from enrollment to students to graduation, and really inspiring current students and prospective students...So it's kind of this whole ecosystem it's all really important. They all feed into one another.

Participant 2.3:

So I would say student recruiters would be one like small aspect of it. But they're the ones who are letting high schoolers know, you know, we have an accessibility center. We have counselors on campus. We have Mental Health Week on campus, we have different like, we have cultural days where we represent different cultures.

Participant 2.4:

So they get used to [institution] and initial perceptions of [institution] from how we do competitively where we are in the media. The web, the digital component now so strong, that we have a digital presence. Our games are broadcast online for free. Most of them are touching us that way. Yeah. Even our international students that seek us out they are finding they're finding us through our positive market placement. But to make the decision that pathway to purchase to choose [institution] over their other options comes from usually another positive. There's got to be some other positive validator, another student, an alumnus, someone has said, Hey, I went there, and I liked it. Yeah, you know, the most I don't think most people make a cold call and pick a school or make an investment of this magnitude without really looking. They're not just doing it for a nice hoodie. Like, they're spending a lot of time and money and they're getting some type of validation or from somebody about their awesome time here.

Participant 3.4:

I think a lot of it has to do with the perception of, if I take a looks purely from an academic standpoint, I have to say almost what their teachers and what their guidance counselors are saying in high school, right? So that says, Okay, well, this is you're really interested in engineering, this school would be perfectly suited for you. And that might just that might be all it takes for that student to really consider a specific school

I think the school actually does a very good job. You know, they get in front of that, from a marketing perspective, and from a branding perspective about how the, you know, we have had successful alumni. And I think, as a student coming into that environment, they want to know, they want to see those stories of success. And because they can see themselves through that, you know, that path, it also makes it real or a, that there's four, you may only have four or five years, and then before you know it, you're out in the real world.

Theme 2: Parental Influence. A strong topic arose about how parental involvement in higher education is driving student decisions. Parental involvement is connected to networks, and it was briefly touched on in that theme how friends and family impact decisions. Parents were placed in their own category based on their significance among interviewees and insights on parental involvement in the higher education decision. Parents were discussed and how they have a significant influence on how students gain information on a university and make their choices. Participants identified that parental involvement in the university decision process was growing, and parents are just as much invested as the students. Parents often pay for schooling, which can

have an impact on student decisions about where to attend, but also there is the aspect of family trees. Usually, students will attend similar institutions where their parents went. As similarly discussed and supported by Kim and Gasman (2001), decisions to attend certain institutions could be based on tradition and upbringing, which can cause individuals to feel obligated to follow certain educational paths. Parents have raised the students, and often are who the students look up to. Parents and their opinions have a significant impact on whether a student attends university. The following excerpts push the idea of parental influence on university perceptions:

Respondent 1.3:

But I do think that family when they talk about a school or when they talk about an area, kids are influenced by parents. And parents are influenced by their kids more so now than ever.

Respondent 2.1:

Some students are forced to education. As you're probably aware, you met some students that are some classmates that were forced here because their parents told them to.

Respondent 3.3:

Parents have been much more involved in the process from choosing an institution to choosing a program.

Respondent 3.4:

I think parent's perception of an institution is extremely important. You know, I look at families that you can trace back generations where they have all gone to either a specific school or they've stayed in, in the university context, as opposed to the college context.

What are the variables that moderate students' relational attitudes with a postsecondary institution?

The theme moderators brought up relates to how student's previous experiences impact their attitudes and how individuals contextual factors impact decisions. It was discovered through interview questions, "How does this evolve over the tenure of their relationship?"; which

surrounded student perceptions and how they change and "How do you think your students form their initial perceptions about your school?", "What motivates or drives them to want to have a relationship with your school?" Relational moderators identified throughout the literature review included duration/intensity and contextual factors. Both of these factors arose in participant interviews through the identified themes. Three parent themes brought up surrounding moderators are displayed in Table 9 below.

Table 9:

Relational Moderators Theme

Parent Themes
1. The cycle of reputation.
2. Student perceptions evolve.
3. Importance of identity match.

Theme 1: The cycle of reputation. This theme discusses how reputation in higher education has a cyclical relationship. The theme of reputation stemmed from many question sources. One of these was the question, "How do you think your students form their initial perceptions about your school?" and the other was, "What are positive things that students could do to impact the outcomes of your school?". The most influential factor that participants believed impacted attitudes on reputation was social media, with 9/10 participants under this category. Others discussed the impact of negative WOM, first impressions, a university's brand and values, and brand presence in communities. Participants believed that students and alumni often are the brand for a university and are representing the school. Student behaviours and decisions can come back to haunt a university. It was interestingly discussed how often students have a responsibility towards a school's reputation and to be careful with how they portray a school. This theme has

discovered an element in a relationship that ties to the cyclical nature of reputation and how current students have a considerable impact on future students. Quotations were chosen below that highlight the impact student behaviours and social media have on reputation:

Respondent 1.1:

Social media, social media, I think, I think honestly, like, I think, well, this is a tricky one. And this is for alumni populations, too. I think our tendency to and, you know, society's kind of setup like that now, but our tendency to try and get a response from people by blasting things publicly on social media is a huge reputational risk for an institution like ours, the amount of time and energy we spend on thinking about and managing potential issues like that. Yeah, I honestly, and again, I'm, I'm a bit of a Luddite when it comes to technology. So I'm learning all this stuff around social media, but I think, you know, students and alumni have the potential to do a lot of damage to the institution's reputation, with, you know, five seconds of typing.

Respondent 2.3:

I think if one student had a bad experience with maybe one instructor, which is inevitable, that could be blown into so many different proportions. And then they can also be the influencer for let's say, a younger sibling, or cousin. And then that, then that word of mouth is negatively affected because of this one person's situation with an instructor.

Respondent 3.2:

I think the reputation piece it's a really big one, and it relates back to that student life cycle. Because it's everything, it's how we recruit, it's how we deliver our programming. It's how we support our students. It has a lot to do with job placement statistics, when you look at some of the leading universities, they post that on their website, which is really difficult to track. And then it has to do with how you may leave your school as an alumni and talk about that school. So it's the reputation pieces constantly like this. Whereas one big event, not necessarily related to a single student, but say breach of ethics, at a higher level within a university environment could seriously impact that University's reputation.

Respondent 3.4:

So something we spend a lot of time working on or working with our student-athletes on their understanding of how they present themselves in kind of the community of the university. But also broadly, people will immediately draw associations with the [institutions sport team] to the university as a whole net that sometimes can be fair, sometimes unfair...So yeah, I think it's the reputational piece is, unfortunately, it comes up a lot. Yeah. And it's, you know, we are very much aware and always look to enhance our reputation in the community and across the country.

Theme 2: Student perceptions evolve. Student perceptions often change based on expectational outcomes. An interesting topic was brought to light when participants were asked, "How does this evolve over the tenure of their relationship?". This question was discussing how student perceptions evolve over their relationship with a university. Many participants (9/12) responded that what the student lives through during their time at university will ultimately change their original perception, and their final attitude will be different than what they started with. Individuals have expectations going into university and a particular perception of how their experience will go. This is a durational factor as it examines perceptions changing over time. Ultimately, this theme explores student expectations and their attitude changes based on actual outcomes. This theme is essential in showing the ultimate value perception of a student is very dependent on the journey they go through and their outcome at the end. This theme is highlighted below in selected quotations:

Respondent 1.4:

You know, I'd say, the first semester is probably hell, for like, the majority of people. And then sort of once they learn, hopefully, you know, how to get the extra support, get the extra help, or whatever they might need, or even just like, Okay, this is what this life is like, I hope that evolves into something, you know, positive, at least that was me. And most of my friends, I think, as some of them are just happy to leave, which is good. Either way, they're happy in the end. Yeah, I would say that it evolves and that I would hope that it would evolve into something positive, but I anticipate it will begin negative.

Respondent 2.2:

As you come in, you kinda, you know, you have your nerves, and you're kind of unsure what the experience is going to be. But then as you're equipped, and you feel supported, you gain confidence. As you see other people who are in this with you, your perception or your needs might change as you grow.

Respondent 3.1:

Yeah, I do think that there's a strong tie to how they're progressing through their degree, and the experiences that they're actually having in the classroom, right, because that's first and foremost, that's the reason why they're at university, or in post-secondary. So if the, if

their academic pathway seems to not be meeting the expectations that they had, or the standards that they set for themselves, that's where I think we started seeing some dissatisfaction.

Theme 3: Importance of identity match. This theme identified that higher education needs to appeal to various student identities by personalizing services. The moderator identity match was discovered through participant responses surrounding contextual student factors. Identity match became a well brought up category with 9/12 participants discussing its importance. Identity match relates to how a student's values and needs align with what a school offers and values. Identity match refers to a variety of factors. It discussed how a school has to fit well with a student's needs and that there are many different needs each student will require, this then played into the factor of how value is often very contextual because students have so many different needs depending on their personality and values. Some participants specifically discussed age and how this can have an impact on student experiences. Interviews surrounded the idea that age means individuals can be at different stages in their life and requiring different resources from a university. It was discussed more mature students might be at an institution to further their career and get out while younger students are going through a discovery process and need more assistance. Literature similarly supported this idea of life stages. Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka (2015) discussed how, depending on where an individual is in their life, it will affect why they attend an institution. The research identified this could be based on self-growth, maturity, change and other reasons (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). Past literature further supported this theme by stating lifestyle and personality characteristics affect the different information a student will need to decide whether to attend a university or not (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2015). This theme shows the need for schools to provide valuable resources for everyone and aim to make one's school as inclusive as possible, so many individuals can identify with it. For example, an 18-year-old might

go through a discovery process while in university and need a lot of assistance while a mature student might come back to further their career and already be very stable. Respondents also discussed how different representation of groups is essential in a university because of the variety of individuals who can attend university. An individual must feel like they can identify with the school they attend and that it can meet their needs on some level. However, it is about providing resources for everyone and making your school as inclusive as possible to many individuals can identify with it.

Respondent 1.1:

And so I think that speaks to one of the other drivers, which is that student identity and that ability to take part in different kinds of activities that are meaningful to those individual students and that sort of thing.

Respondent 2.3:

You want to make sure that as a post-secondary, you're catering towards not only the physical diversity, so can be race, could be the colour of your skin, that kind of thing. But also, the diversity that comes with a student's mind, like mental health, health, that kind of thing. Yeah. And all the other like, other diversity that we don't necessarily see. Okay. Sometimes I think people forget about the other types of diversity and not just colour. Right, so the fact that post-secondary has a lot of student clubs that are associated with different areas.

Respondent 3.4:

I think that goes back to what I was saying a little bit earlier about the questions that prospective students are asking now if their institutions before enrollment during the admission process to making sure they are a fit. So I do think that at least I hope that students are open to asking those questions, say, here's what I'm really interested in, is there something like that for me here at this school, and if there isn't, you know, maybe there is a school that might be a better fit.

So I do feel as though their students are coming to the table with more questions and making sure it's the right fit for them, which, on the flip side is actually I think a good thing for the institution, because then you have students who really want to be there and understand what they're getting into.

What variables contribute to the formation of a students' relational attitudes in higher education?

Attitude outcomes represent the emotions and feelings that participants identified in the student relationship. Many of these attitudes were a result of the relationship. These arose in the interviews from the question segment about "Relationship Attitudes." For example, participants were asked, "How do you define satisfaction with regard to a student relationship?". Trust, satisfaction, identification, reputation, commitment, and interdependence were all identified as higher education relational attitudes in the literature review. Interviewee results identified attitudinal themes around trust, satisfaction, and commitment, which were all supported in the significant literature. Three parent themes came to light from this discussion with participants, which are included in Table 10 below.

Table 10:

Relational Attitudes Themes

Parent Themes
1. Satisfaction is linked to faculty relationships.
2. Trust is personal.
3. Relational interdependence.

Theme 1: Satisfaction is linked to faculty relationships. This theme discovered relational satisfaction in higher education is connected to faculty's impact on student success**.** Participants were asked, "How do you define satisfaction with regard to a student relationship?" and many factors resulted from this question. The main factors included recognition of students, having goals met, taking risks, appreciation from the student, and positive WOM. Students were seen as satisfied if their objectives had been met, and they were happy with their results. The student

success piece is strongly related to how faculty helps students reach their goals, which brings in

an interdependence piece. Literature supports this view of satisfaction. Kasiri and others (2017)

described satisfaction as the fulfillment of expectations, which results in happiness. Ultimately,

feelings of success contribute to the formation of relational satisfaction attitudes in students. This

theme touches on the importance of stepping outside your comfort zone, in this sense, it discusses

taking risks, and if you are not doing this, you ultimately will be less satisfied. Satisfaction also

ties to the cyclical nature of a relationship, and students are looking for recognition from faculty

and for faculty to help them achieve something. Satisfaction is, therefore, directly related to how

faculty interact with students and help them throughout their journey. Quotations below follow

discussions surrounding relational satisfaction:

Respondent 2.3:

I think when you're able to help them through a problem, or knowing that they're successful, or they're succeeding, or achieving, and something that, to me, is like satisfaction. So I know that you know, I'm doing my job in whatever little capacity I can...They've gotten that answer they need, or they've, they know where to go to get it.

Respondent 2.4:

Satisfaction on the student relationship is there's usually an element of thanks or appreciation. Yeah, there's seeing them on their journey. Right graduation. Working through an initiative or something would be. And the other thing for me from a satisfaction perspective is because I deal with people who have passion, and you get to see them take a risk. And I think that's the level of if the students are taking risks, that tells me that satisfy that there's a level of satisfaction there. When they're not taking risks, not showing passion. There's something missing.

Respondent 3.1:

I think it's in how they promote the university, so I can tell someone was satisfied with their interaction with the institution if they speak about it positively to other people.

Theme 2: Trust is personal. Interviewee data showed relational trust in higher education is anchored in interpersonal relationships. Participants were asked, "How do you define trust with regard to a student relationship?" which resulted in the trust being seen as honesty, being reliable, the trust allows for collaboration, and openness. 10/12 participants had these various views of trust. Participants also agreed trust shows a positive relationship, which resulted from the question "How do you define a positive student relationship?". Trust is a valuable theme because it builds on the aspect of expectations. Many interviewees believed if you're reliable and follow through on promises; students know they can come to you and form relationships. This aligns with literature discussing trust, which states trust influences relationships through its impact on views of reliability and expectation fulfillment (Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan, 2015). Kim and others (2011) additionally stated how trust involves need fulfillment, reliability, reciprocity, goal congruence, and confidence in one's partner. This literature helps further connect results from interviews as participant responses are strongly tied to the aspect of forming meaningful relationships between students and faculty. Ultimately, students need a feeling of trust to get more out of their relationships. Compiled answers of trust relating to building relationships are listed below:

Respondent 1.1:

Like, I just go back to the brand pillars, and it's like, actually delivering on the brand pillars. So it's not, it's, you know, how we talk about, you know, perceived values and actually lived values, it's like, you know, the universities actually, you know living the values. And it's not, it's not form, but it is function. So I would say, you know, if we say this is our brand, and we live that in student's finances, and that's how trust is built.

Respondent 2.3:

I think the ability to be a solution provider. Number one, whether it's, you have the answer already, or you're resourceful, and you know who to contact to provide that solution. So I think that has an impact on trust. And then the ability to be approachable. Is that sort of feeds into it? There's so many aspects I think that feed into trust. Yeah. It's not just you

want me to do something, and I'll do it. And therefore you trust me. Right? It's, it's like, yeah, being able to provide the solutions. Being approachable. There's just engaged being communicated in a positive manner, or it doesn't have to be like, happy go lucky and be amazing. It doesn't have to be like that kind of conversation. But it could even be just an insightful or in-depth kind of conversation. I feel like all of that builds into trusting.

Respondent 2.4:

So trusting relationships are the ones where they've let you in. And not everyone, just because someone's closed or has other things going on doesn't mean they don't trust you. But the ones that are most trust, trusting are the ones where you've worked together on something, you either help them overcome a barrier, an obstacle, or you've done something experiential to build some trust. Yeah, I don't think they trust anyone just because of your title or, and I think those days are gone. Yeah, I think it's more about you know that you can help them overcome something or live through something. And then you kind of have this welcoming in exchange carrying.

Theme 3: Relational interdependence. Theme 3 discovered that relational commitment in higher education requires interdependency. There were two aspects to this identified. First, commitment involves coming back, supporting the school, and having the best interests at heart. The second piece includes expectations, and if expectations are being met, participants saw this as a way of showing one's commitment. 9/10 participants mentioned expectations. This theme was also related to the question, "How do you define commitment with regard to a student relationship?". Participants discussed it was not only about faculty fulfilling expectations but also about students. Students are expected by the university to fill their promises of completing classwork and engagement while students expect faculty and administrators to fulfill their promise as a school. It was also discussed how commitment shows a student's support for a school, and if a school shows support to a student, it includes having one's best interests at heart. This ties back to theories in literature discussing how commitment involves feeling a relationship is crucial, so one puts effort into maintaining it and makes sacrifices to dedicate resources to the relationship (Kim et al. 2011; McNally & Irving 2010; Wilkins et al. 2016). Ultimately, the need for faculty and students to fulfill expectations for each other brings out the theme of interdependence.

Ultimately, there is a shared responsibility in university relationships for both students and faculty to dedicate resources to one another to create an attitude of commitment. There is a shared responsibility in university relationships which is demonstrated through the below quotations:

Respondent 1.1:

There's a few different ways to think of that like, so commitment could be, you know, they're trying to complete their degree. They've gone to Athabasca to do a few online courses because they're just trying to get the credits. But they come back to do the last course or whatever at [institution] so that they get their parchment from Mount Royal, right. So that's one level of commitment. And then a second level of commitment is, you know, I'm going to run for president, you know, [student association], or, you know, I'm going to become a student mentor, something like that. So I think that level of commitment is about. Okay, I've gotten so much out of this institution that I want to contribute back to its continued success.

Respondent 1.2:

Man, hopefully, if I say I'm going to do something, I'm going to do something. So commit to doing what I said I would do to being knowledgeable. So if it was if I was handing out wrong information, or something that I think would be breaking that commitment, they should be assuming that I know what I'm talking about when they come in here. Yeah, and I think the advocacy piece too like, once in a while, there will be something that's like, just weird. It's like, why is this happening this isn't right. And, and investigating a little bit further and trying to figure out what's really going on? So I think going the extra mile like ask them.

Respondent 3.4:

Well, one that they get through school, I think is important, right, so that they're committed to finishing up their degree. I want to see whatever expectations were set for our goals, specifically speaking with student-athletes, whatever expected and expectations were set up for them are being met. Right, and they're achieving to the level that they should be achieving. So I think that just having clear expectations, and that sense, is extremely important.

What variables contribute to a students relational behaviour towards a postsecondary institution?

Student participation was a theme that arose discussing the various ways students choose to get involved at school. The surrounding behaviours arose from the interview questions

underneath "Relationship Behaviours." This section included questions such as "What are positive things that students could do to impact the outcomes of your school?". Through in-depth scholarly literature searches, advocacy, loyalty, engagement, and alumni were identified as variables associated with relational behaviours in higher education. The themes derived from interviews included engagement, alumni, student empowerment and student feedback. Participants identified four parent themes surrounding student behaviours in post-secondary institutions, illustrated in table 11 below.

Table 11:

Relational Behaviours Themes

Parent Themes
1. Engagement creates a community.
2. Long Term Relationship Value.
3. Student Empowerment Benefits.
4. Value of Student Feedback.

Theme 1: Engagement creates a community. Higher education engagement is centred around, creating a community. The theme of engagement involves many factors that participants identified as valuable. 9/12 participants discussed engagement outside of the class, such as research, leadership, industry experts, volunteering, and community engagement. Participants believed engagement shows commitment. Different activities such as volunteering, community engagement, research, leadership, campus events and more were identified as ways students could get involved to better their own experiences and other's experience, ultimately impacting attitudes. If students got involved, it was identified by participants; this ultimately creates a better atmosphere on campus as students are supporting each other and building communities. Similarly,

participants said engagement makes students have a better experience on campus and enjoy their time. A variety of events came up with ways students get involved. This included orientation, high-school events, information sessions, sports, open house, and campus tours. Another important finding that was found surrounding engagement was that sport directors at universities see merchandise as a unionizing tool. Schools are changing logos on clothing to be less segmented. For example, either the sports logo will be used, or the general university logo will be used. So schools are trying to stop using symbols that are exclusively for specific groups like sports players as they believe this is separating the school. This ties to the aspect of community and the need to make feel students feel a part of the community to value their time at school and build relationships with the school. Merchandise is also connected to identity. When students buy apparel from school, it is representing who they are. This is important again in making feel students feel connected to their university. If they purchase apparel, it could show their pride in the school and a sense of belonging. Higher education sports were also seen as a tool to connect students to their university by participants. Participants identified that many students start playing sports when they are young, and it is a part of their identity. Universities can use this as a way to connect with students as communities are often created out of sports environments. Some universities even use sports as a touchpoint for younger children through camps to start reaching them from a young age. This provides universities with the advantage to begin leveraging sports departments and faculty to build a sense of belonging among students. Universities should additionally research the opportunity to make their merchandise universal as another community connecting tool. Engagement is an interesting concept related to community and that the more schools build a sense of interaction, and involvement the better, this discussion will further be illustrated with quotations below:

Respondent 3.4:

Positive things students could do to impact the outcome of the school get engaged in the community. I think it is really important, right. So not only for their own personal growth but just for, again, that perception of the university and their impact on the community, I think, is really important.

Respondent 1.1:

Just the, honestly, the student leadership stuff, so getting involved, volunteering, you know, running student clubs, all of that sort of stuff creates the kind of future alumni that will have a vested interest in staying engaged with the school. So honestly, I think that kind of that volunteering, and that extracurricular, co-curricular, whatever you call it, um, activity is super important.

Respondent 1.4:

But like volunteer, whether it be for orientation, or open house, like volunteer in any situation, which gets them involved with other students, whether it be like potential students, or current students, or alumni, anything like that, just anything to sort of foster that community.

Respondent 2.2:

I think getting involved in things outside of the classroom; I think that really evolves. Just the feeling of campus a sense of community and improves the student experience for everybody, the more students get involved with clubs, or like the student newspaper, or volunteering with a flock, that kind of thing. The campus is better if it's more welcoming, and more people are supporting one another.

Respondent 3.1:

I think they're more willing to give their time and contribute back to the institution than just taking so they might volunteer more to help make other students experience better. So take our student leaders; for example, they likely have a more positive affinity to the institution as they're more engaged. So they've had positive relationships that have made them want to be engaged, and therefore they're giving back to other students to help them, get them feeling the same way.

Theme 2: Long term relationship value. This theme discovered that alumni engagement in higher education is related to interpersonal relationships. Alumni engagement and impact appeared as a meaningful discussion. 7/12 participants discussed the importance of maintaining the connection with alumni through creating an after grad community, mentoring students, giving

back, and coming back for school. This theme relates to the need for building interpersonal relationships and creating a community in the higher education context. University's growth will be a positive result from this maintained relationship as participants identified alumni's desire to give back to the community through mentoring students, attending higher education events, donations and more. This attitudinal feeling of being part of a community ultimately leads alumni to continue to interact with institutions. This can further be seen as a reason why alumni KPI are beneficial to measure because they show the long term effect of building connections with students. However, the issue of alumni transitions was brought up. Interviewees stated there could be a lack of communication and support for alumni who are leaving university and going into the workforce, and this causes issues. This is an essential element for faculty working in alumni relations to focus on to ensure the sense of community is not being lost once students graduate. It is valuable to build strong relationships with one student, so they feel a connection to the school and continue giving back even after they graduate. Alumni engagement and benefits are highlighted with participant quotations below:

Respondent 1.2:

Yeah, I like, I know, it's good for like, alumni. It's good for it because they'll donate after they graduate and all of this stuff. So I can see where it's helpful for the institution that they're committed to us.

Respondent 2.2:

So that's something that I also manage, and then maintaining just our digital assets to make sure they're up to date, strategy around engaging alumni and different programming, such as our alumni, we have events for them. So how do we get them to come to events and then really mining for ideas as to why they might want to connect with us so or just recognizing them.

I mean, there's a, you know, there's the whole piece about alumni, being able to invest in current students, so that can be time, talent, or and financially. And it's really important that they understand what [institution] did for them.

Respondent 3.1:

But yeah, from an alumni engagement perspective, that's my goal is to maintain that community that was here while you're on campus, and provide venues for you to continue that relationship in association with the institution, so that we can see the benefit that that's had and tell that story.

Respondent 3.2:

There's so many ways to engage as an alum. So here in [institution], we do a lot of community engagement events, like [institution] hour, where we bring in speakers from the community, and we invite alum and our community members, like anyone to, you know, come to a breakfast event and hear a speaker on a certain topic. So we can, we can keep them coming back through the events we deliver. They can do a mentorship with students, there's a big mentorship program, like we do smaller events, like lunch and learns where we'll bring in someone to address a group of students and talk about their company or their career path or something of interest to students.

Theme 3: Student empowerment benefits. The research highlighted, in higher education, student empowerment benefits an individual's value outcome. Empowerment of the student is a topic interviewees brought up. This theme discusses how it is not all up to the university for students to have a good experience and that students have to be accountable. 8/12 participants discussed it. This theme discussed how students should not expect universities to do all the work for them and that students have to take control of the resources and opportunities available to them. It was agreed faculty should still provide students support but not to the point they are doing everything for the student, at some point, it is up to the student to take control of their situation. If students rely too heavily on university faculty to be the driving force for their involvement, then the value students ultimately get out of the relationship will be one way and have no significant impact. Research indicates the lack of student empowerment can negatively cause a lack of student engagement in-class learning and students can disengage from schools based on this (McQuillan, 2005). Empowering students can provide them new outlooks on the world, they can learn to appreciate the challenges they might face in life and the opportunities, and students can feel they

have more control and power over situations (McQuillan, 2005). Kirk and others (2016) also

discussed the benefits of student empowerment, such as higher grades and more participation in

extracurriculars. The topic of empowering university students to benefit their outcome is further

described in the following quotes:

Respondent 1.2:

And I think it's that awareness that I don't have all the answers and trying to communicate that to the students. So I'm not, I'm not here to give you all of these answers and tell you what to do. I don't know you, you know you. And so I think that's the other principle that I try to hold close as possible.

Respondent 1.4:

I don't know if there is enough that you can do. Because, you know, there's only so much the institution can do. Right? I would like, yeah, I mean, but we send you emails with all the information, but I don't even read those emails when I receive them. Right. So it's so hard. Like, how do you? I don't know. I don't know. I would say it's definitely not enough is done. But I don't know what can be done. Because at some point, like all the information is out there. And it has to be like one or two steps on the student side to actually seek it out.

Respondent 2.2:

I think when students get stuck in, you kind of they get in their own way. And they think, Oh, I didn't, I didn't get enough from this. But they didn't actually put any effort in, or they say, like my student experience sucked, it's like, well, what? Where the onus is on you, like, there is a point where [institution] needs to support you, but are you reaching out for those? Are you taking advantage of the resources? So I think that would negatively impact their experience. And then maybe like their testimonial or and then also bring, could bring their peers down. And depending on what, you know, scenario, it is.

Respondent 3.1:

So I think the university does a good job of providing the resources and making them available to students. But that not all students necessarily feel comfortable or taking the initiative, or finding the time and making that hurry to take advantage of both.

Respondent 3.3:

One thing you want to be careful of and just personally because you want to see students succeed so much, you don't want to put in more work than they're willing to put in for their own success. Yeah. And so I think seeing a student who's willing to put in the work to get where they want to go, and they don't have an expectation that someone's going to do that

work for them. I think that's, that's really important. But that's definitely something like I am careful of, even in my like world as a social worker, and also with student advising is like, having that boundary as well.

I would say a positive student relationship would look like a student who's not depending on their advisor for the answer to be told what to do, but just really coming to just seek guidance and bounce some ideas off of them and just explore different ideas that they have. I think that would be really positive. I would say maybe just on the negative side, I think a negative interaction would be if somebody came to me and I just told them exactly what to do or even like, sharing my opinion on what they can do, I think because students at that age are just so susceptible to wanting to do the right thing or to impress somebody by it. Like to make people happy, like, what's the right thing?

Theme 4: Value of student feedback. Higher education student feedback is a continuous cycle that is beneficial to the student experience. When asking the question "How do you define a positive student relationship?" participants had multiple responses of what they believed involved a good relationship. This included honesty, being comfortable, good communication, fairness, retention. However, the concept of feedback was most prominent among participants with 7/12 believing in the benefits of students providing feedback. Research states feedback is valuable for institutions in guiding teaching practices and making management decisions (Alderman et al., 2012). Participants identified the value student feedback provides universities and how it ultimately allows faculty to provide students with better experiences. Additionally, research supports this view by stating that feedback is one of the most powerful influences on achievement (Carless & Boud, 2018). This theme relates to the sense of interdependence. Students want to feel comfortable when talking with faculty, and they also want to feel a sense of honesty. Additionally, faculty appreciate feedback and need it. Faculty want to hear from students to improve their processes and make students happier. It is a cycle of providing feedback, learning from mistakes, forming more relationships and doing it all over again. Research supports this by describing how feedback is a loop that allows for continuous improvement and action in higher education (Alderman et al., 2012). Individuals working in various university departments signified the value

they could get out of student feedback. Institutes should consider ways to make students feel more comfortable giving feedback, as this was identified as a barrier in providing it. Other barriers identified for institutions to consider with feedback is properly expressing feedback to departments so not only high officials have the information but individuals working hands-on with students do. The behaviour of student feedback is heightened when students feel comfortable and open talking to administrators. Respondent discussions below represent the ideas of student feedback and its benefits:

Respondent 1.2:

So I had a student who had this issue, and it like, it really wasn't, wasn't a good situation. He had some really valuable feedback here. He wasn't like, yeah, the teacher was bad, or like, whatever this was, no, that's really good feedback that they should know, higher up where they can do something about it. But I'm not the conduit for that. It has to go through five chains above me before it gets to the people who would actually be able to impact like, do anything with that. So I feel like there's a disconnect between.

Respondent 2.4:

Think there'd be an exchange of feedback in a positive relationship that grows, the network makes things better. Learn from errors, things of that, but it's definitely honest, transparent and reciprocal. Talking with somebody not talking at them.

Respondent 3.3:

Like student feedback is huge. We don't get a lot of it because I think students are maybe like, afraid to give feedback to the university. But like, that's how we like to create a better environment, right, so we're getting good feedback.

What are the variables that impact key performance indicators of a post-secondary institution?

Key performance indicators were a big topic of discussion in the interviews. This was mostly because many of the questions at the end of the interview evolved around KPI's. Such as: "What are some of the key performance indicators of postsecondary education?" "How do students directly or indirectly influence these key performance indicators?" "How do you formally or informally measure the relationship between the influence of these students and your school's

performance?" and "What are the key challenges of measuring key performance indicators for your school?". Key performance indicators are discussed as a way to measure relational behaviours to value creation. In the model, they are represented as the step for gathering data on the relational variables in the model. Using participant interviews, we gathered research on how KPIs are currently being used in higher education, how they are viewed by administrators and current issues in university KPIs. Understanding the issue among KPIs allows us to understand better each research question and how to measure them better. Overall, one central theme was identified from the various respondent insights identified as KPI Measurement. This parent theme is further discussed below.

Theme 1: KPI measurement. Interviews uncovered higher education KPIs lack measuring student attitudes throughout a life cycle. Some of the main views around KPIs were they are subjective, the students largely control the KPI results, there can be consistency issues, often KPIs are not communicated with staff, and there is a lack of measuring the student impact on PSI success. This theme was significant in discovering key issues in how KPI's are being viewed by PSI. Students and their impact was a large discussion topic. Students are viewed as having control over the KPIs because they are what is being measured, and their opinions are ultimately what the institute values. However, it was then discussed by participants that universities lack connecting PSI success to student's impact. This is an issue when wanting to specifically know how students control KPI's and provide an area for universities to further investigate. The variables among the research questions can be utilized as each is connected to students and their relationship with a university. If KPIs are in the student's control, institutions should consider how they can measure attitudes and behaviours of students properly. This theme also relates to many other discussions about the student lifecycle and how measuring attitudes at points in time can become a risk in

gaining valid insights into how students feel about their university relationships. As discussed by interviewees, there are often issues such as infrequent measuring, only measuring at one point in time and not during the entire student lifecycle, and the challenge of having student points of view be very subjective. The issues are often strongly correlated to the students and finding the best way to measure their attitudes. Mauboussin (2012) supports this view by expressing that professionals can rely on the wrong statistics and decision-making processes. Participant interviews ultimately identified the theme of how higher education KPIs lack measuring student attitudes throughout a life cycle. This is a concern when looking to understand student value creation properly, and this is ultimately where the HERMM will aid in helping universities connect student's impact on PSI success. The issues with KPI's are often strongly correlated to the students and finding the best way to measure their attitudes. Chosen participant responses surrounding KPI's are listed below:

Respondent 1.2:

The unfortunate thing is that none of this is communicated to the rest of the institution or frontline. So I don't know what those KPIs are. I have no idea how many students graduate from business every year from each program. I have no idea how many of those are caught.

Respondent 2.2:

I think sometimes it could be like, I mean, how do you measure pride? For example, that's really important, and there are ways to measure it, but it's what are the best ways to measure that. So that could feel ambiguous. So it's figuring out what those key indicators are. Key measurements are. And some of it is just through testimonial. So that's that you can't kind of you can't really measure that, but you can show it. So I think sometimes people get caught up in a measurement number of meeting like how many.

Respondent 2.4:

Well, I think it's all about them. At the end of the day, you know, we don't make widgets here we help people get educated. So they are our product they are our, you know, old economics, you know, they are our widgets, right. So, you know, they're our number one, they are our product and our process all at the same time. Yeah, students are key. So, you know, are we providing the programs that they're interested in? They'd want to buy, right? Well, they give us their time, their money and their space. Okay? Do we provide programs that they want to have fun with? Do they work us into their day? Right? That's how you

can tell if you're being relevant.

Well, retention is a key performance indicator, right? And it's just as important as, you know, starting a new relationship. It's retaining a relationship. One of the barriers is sometimes when you don't retain a relationship. It's not for a bad reason. Right? People might transfer out, people might get jobs early. Or you might not retain them for something totally out of your control. Yeah. So while we talk about retention, and we try to own our results on retention, failed retention, per se, is not necessarily bad. It's not necessarily in your control. So we talk about, you know, retaining your client, retaining your customer to provide a good experience, they'll come back, but sometimes they just don't, because life goes on things change, the economy changes.

Respondent 3.4:

I've made it kind of an approach of mine too, well most people will talk about having an open-door policy, but I actually encourage student-athletes to come in and talk. I try to make myself available at most of their games to most of my family's dismay, there all the time. But I think, again, it's developing that relationship, so I can get a sense and have like, quick touchpoints with students, you know, on a consistent basis, I find it's more valuable than then waiting till the end of the year, just to provide a little bit of a paper survey. Right. So, yeah, that would be our approach just being more hands-on.

His comment was, you know, what, it should be more based on how someone is doing ten years down the road if we're always talking about all the transferable skills that are being taught through athletics? Are they actually benefiting from them? Or do we just say, hey, you learn teamwork, or you learn problem-solving, you learn resiliency, that's all great, but ten years down the road? Are they doing what they want to do? And are they actually able to apply those skills?

Summary of Findings

The findings section completed an overview of all the parent themes discovered in researcher interviews. These central themes were sectioned into groups surrounding the variables in the HERMM. The topics surrounding the model will allow the researcher to support the development of the HERMM. Quotations and brief descriptions were additionally provided for each theme. In the next section, the results will be further discussed, and implications will be tied to the research.

Table 12:

Master Theme Table

Theme	Scope	# Respondents	Literature Support
Location, Location, Location	Where a student lives will strongly influence their decision to attend a university	7/12	Bergerson (2009), Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015)
Financial Influence	Higher education economics impacts student perceptions of a university.	8/12	Leeds and DesJardins (2015), Fischer (2011)
Interpersonal Relationships	University programs are connected to building interpersonal relationships.	8/12	Hamilton et al. (2019), Barney (1991)
Importance of Community	Community in higher education is anchored to creating a sense of belonging.	12/12	Elkins et al. (2011)
Mediation Channels are Driven by Personal Connections	Networks, media, and events have a cyclical impact on higher education and are some of the various ways universities get the word out about their institution.	12/12	Siamagka et al. (2015), Huggins & Thompson (2015), Fischbach (2006)
Parental Influence	Parental involvement in higher education is driving student decisions.	7/12	Kim & Gasman (2001)
The Cycle of Reputation	Reputation is cyclical and influences how current students have an impact on future students.	9/12	Boyle & Magnusson (2007), Finch, McDonald & Staple (2013)
Student Perceptions Evolve	Student perceptions are changing over time based on expectational outcomes.	9/12	Nabilou et al. (2014)
Importance of Identity Match	Student identities are contextual and universities must personalize services.	9/12	Balaji et al. (2016), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Wilkins et al. (2016), Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka (2015)
Satisfaction is Linked to Faculty Relationships	Relational satisfaction in higher education is connected to student success.	9/12	Kasiri et al. (2017)
Trust is Personal	To form relational trust in higher education institutions must have interpersonal relationships.	10/12	Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan (2015), Kim et al. (2011)
Relational interdependence	Relational commitment in higher education requires interdependency.	9/12	Kim et al. (2011), McNally & Irving (2010), Wilkins et al. (2016)
Engagement Creates a Community	Higher education engagement allows communities to form on campus.	9/12	Elkins, Forrester, & Noel-Elkins (2011)
Long Term Relationship Value	Alumni engagement in higher education is related to interpersonal relationships.	7/12	Meer & Rosen (2009), Mael & Ashforth (1992), Pedro et al. (2018)
Student Empowerment Benefits	Empowering students will have significant long term benefits for them.	8/12	McQuillan (2005), Kirk et al (2016)

Value of Student Feedback	When students provide feedback it is a continuous cycle that is beneficial to the university experience.	7/12	Alderman et al. (2012, Carless & Boud (2018)
KPI Measurement	KPIs lack measuring student attitudes throughout a life cycle.	12/12	Mauboussin (2012)

Conclusion

This section further examines the results by investigating implications for higher education institutes, practitioners, and scholars. The conclusion begins by reviewing the limitations of the research conducted. Then the section moves in to interpreting the findings and relating it back to previous scholarly theories. The findings are presented in the format of six identified implications: university is a high risk "purchase" decision, reputation is a cyclical factor and comes up in various relational stages, the influence of time on relational dynamics, relational conditioning, there is an overarching need for personalization in all aspects of the university experience and there is a strong need for universities to create an emotional connection with students. The six research questions are discussed among the implication findings. The conclusion will then discuss recommendations for future research where quantitative research will be suggested and an in-depth survey applicable for future studies will be presented. The paper will summarize with a short discussion about the research contributed through this process.

Limitations of Research

Creswell (1998) discussed the researcher's role in a phenomenological study and stated it is "largely related to the researcher's interpretation" (p. 207). The primary investigator was the leading individual in control of the study execution and analysis. This raises the concern of a risk of bias. However, we managed these risks through a rigorous verification process and the process proposed by Creswell for overcoming bias in research. This study also sought the guidance, support and review of a scholarly expert in the field throughout each process of the study to

maintain confirmability and dependability of the research. Additionally, using the technique of a phenomenological study provides added insight into the research problem proposed by gathering qualitative interpretations. Due to the constraints of time weighing on this study, not all potential variables could be captured in this study as there are many options to be investigated. Therefore, the created model can be considered one of many other options when looking at higher education relationships to the value creation among students. Another limitation of this study is that it was not a longitudinal study, and therefore a change in the populations' behaviour over time could not be measured. This study was designed to specifically test the validity and reliability of a methodology associated with the conceptual model at a point in time. Additionally, only qualitative research was conducted to test the model's validity. To further test the model, quantitative methods could be used. A survey instrument would allow various constructs in the model to be operationalized and statistically tested.

Implications

This study used a phenomenological approach to researching the systematic nature of relational value creation in higher education. The theoretical basis for this study was relationship marketing, a strategy that involves building, maintaining and developing consumer relations (Agariya & Singh, 2011). Using this theory and the Finch, O'Reilly, Hillenbrand, and Abeza (2015) a conceptual model was adapted for application in a higher education context to allow practitioners to connect variables that contribute to the creation of relational value between students and a PSI. The goal of this research was to operationalize the variables in the HERMM using in-depth interviews. This next section refers back to the research results in the previous writings and connects it back to the foundational literature.

University is a high risk "purchase" decision.

Simoes and Soares (2010) discussed that higher education is a high perceived risk decision because of its ultimate impact on individual's lives and careers. When making purchasing decisions, risk is the chance of loss or negative outcomes associated with buying a product or service; it is related to the uncertainty of a decision outcome (Simoes & Soares, 2010). A strong point of consensus was identified throughout the themes and interviews surrounding the use of personal networks and trusted sources when making higher education decisions. Consistent with other high-risk purchase decisions, students seek risk mitigation through trusted sources, leading by personal networks. Students value their networks as information sources, for example participants discussed how individuals who have lived the experience provide students valuable insight into the reality of a university. Participants identified that networks, and the information they provide has a strong impact on student attitudes because they are valued friends and family with a strong influence. The literature supports the value of networks with Huggins and Thompson (2015), discussing how people connected in some way and their interactions impact future decisions and the successfulness of PSIs.

Research also examines the value in strong social ties and how marketers are beginning to notice the impact social ties have on consumer's decision making (Wang & Chang, 2013). Strong ties like friends are said to have more influence than weak ties such as acquaintances. For high-risk products, it is advised organizations should utilize strong social ties in a network for recommending products to consumers (Wang & Chang, 2013). In the higher education context, there are multiple information sources students draw on to make a decision as it is a high-risk purchase (Simoes & Soares, 2010). This appears to be a valuable theme for individuals working in sport, recruitment, and alumni. This is because all of these departments have ways of impacting

the student experience to get the word out about a university positively. Alumni can draw on student success stories, recruitment can leverage attending high-schools and influencing perceptions early, and the sports world of a university can share messages through their sports broadcasts or with attendees in person at events. Ultimately, the sources utilized for high-risk purchase decisions allow us to understand better what mediates the impact on student attitudes.

Reputation is a cyclical factor and comes up in various relational stages.

Reputation emerges as a critical factor throughout an individual's relational engagement at a university. Reputation emerged as a strong discussion point in participant interviews, and it was identified not only as a relational attitude but also as an antecedent, mediator and moderator. The literature on reputation supports the view that perceptions and values of an institution can change depending on a university's reputation (Boyle & Magnusson, 2007). Previous direct or indirect awareness of an institution's reputation emerged as a relational driver. It also plays a role in anchoring an expectation (high or low) that the relationship is evaluated against. Therefore, exceeding reputation expectations can be a relational asset, whereas not achieving reputation expectations can be a relational liability. Finch, Hillenbrand & Rubin (2015) support these claims by describing reputation as a multidimensional view and stating a distinct dimension of reputation is an individual's awareness and expectations of an organization that can impact perceptions.

Interviews also raised the topic that previous direct or indirect experiences with an institution can either moderate or mediate attitude formation. Research has also identified the impact of indirect and direct experiences expressing it in terms of proximity, and if consumers have direct experience, their perceptions will be formed based on their specific experience with the organization (Finch, Hillenbrand & Rubin, 2015). Student behaviour's impact on reputation was an interesting topic throughout interviews, which discussed students have a responsibility

towards a school's reputation, and individuals must be careful with how they portray a school. Students who attend a university are seen affiliated with it and become a part of the brand image. This theme has discovered an element in a relationship that ties to the cyclical nature of reputation and how current students have a significant impact on future students. Thus, attitudes of future or current students are strongly influenced by previous students and how they portray the school. In particular, faculty in sport recognized the impact student-athletes could have on reputation. For example, student-athletes are strong portrayers of a university brand, so how what they choose to post on social media or how they choose to act in public can be directly related to the school. If faculty in sports make this connection, they can create an advantage for the university's reputation by influencing sports athletes. As similarly discussed in the literature, reputation can serve as a competitive advantage when being ranked against other PSI's (Finch, McDonald & Staple, 2013). Lastly, reputation emerged as a higher-order composite relational attitude that contributed to relational behaviour. Grunig and Hung-Baesecke (2015) discuss this in terms of public relations and how organizations should be working to communicate effectively to the public to form impressions and create positive associations with an organization. Conclusively, reputation appears in many stages throughout the HERMM, impacting various factors of student perceptions.

The influence of time on relational dynamics.

The concept of time is unique and amplified in the student-institutional relationship as the university is a high-risk decision. Reputation, identity, feedback, KPIs, changing student perceptions, attitudes, alumni and more all impacted by time. For example, the value of feedback was identified among participants. There are many different feedback loops, and the cycle moves fast. Individuals are passing judgment on the institution based on institution impression, professor's impact, classes and more. Therefore, there are a bunch of mini-cycles that feed into the feedback

loop. Another example of the durational impact that arose through interviews was how student's original perceptions and attitudes about a university are ultimately changed and very different by the time students start attending a school and becoming intertwined with the university experience.

New literature was examined, and research-supported that student perceptions about their school are very important in considering how one can improve educational environments (Nabilo et al., 2014). Research stated schools need to utilize qualitative approaches to learn about student's expectations so they can be met. This study showed that eight out of ten student expectations are not being met for educational services (Nabilo et al., 2014). This theme is vital in showing the ultimate value perception of a student is very dependent on the journey they go through. Since the journey is an ongoing process, it can be challenging to measure their attitude at specific points of their experience. Nabilo and others (2014) suggest to make a school be perceived as reliable in what they portray; institutions should focus on educational experts in the field and ensuring they have had the proper training to listen to and understand student needs. Therefore, universities should consider this aspect of relational attitudes when creating measures for students. Longitudinal studies might be more effective in truly gaining insight into student's attitudes as they are changing based on experience. Thus, student attitudes towards an institution are affected by their time and duration at a university and specifically if expectations are being met.

Lee and others (2015) discuss duration in the context of the franchise industry and how duration can influence the dynamics of a relationship. Relationships change over time, and the more engagement with parties in a relationship can lead to further trust and more tolerance if negative situations arise (Lee et al., 2015). Time is also a critical dimension of reputation attitude. For example, it can provide insight when considering the dynamics of higher education relationships in the first year vs fourth-year students, as their attitudes on the institution's reputation

can be very different based on the aspect of time. Research further examines trust in buyer-seller relationships in the marketing context, stating consumers rely on experiences of a service/product over time, and this can ultimately build trust (Dadzie et al., 2018). For example, when selling produce if, over time, the seller is repeatedly inaccurately weighing the produce for customers, this can cause the relationship to deteriorate over time (Dadzie et al., 2018).

As duration is a process of time that is continuous, this can prove a risk to current higher education KPIs when trying to evaluate attitudes at a certain point in when perceptions can be morphed by time. For example, when conducting teacher evaluations, at the moment, students might leave a bad review from the frustration of course work, but later in their career will appreciate the class that challenged them. Duration has a significant impact on many HERMM factors and the ultimate perceived student value.

Relational conditioning

A key relational goal that emerged in the interviews was tied to a desire for students to become empowered and self-directed. However, the challenge interviewees spoke of was the conditioning these students have had since they entered formal education of being part of a larger system, and the system will guide them to a pre-defined outcome (e.g. junior high, high-school graduation). Literature has discussed the impact of parental involvement on the development of adults and the negative effects of overparenting can have (Schliffrin, 2014). In contrast, parenting that supports children's autonomy should be supported so they can learn to solve their problems and become more independent as they age (Schliffrin, 2014). This research also discusses the relation to university students and how there is a concern parents continuing trying to control their college students. This was similarly identified throughout interviews as participants identified there is a need for balance in the parent-student relationship and the need for students to, in some

way, rely less on their parents. Faculty in recruitment has already started to realize the parental impact on decision making and the need to help students become an independent individual.

Additionally, helicopter parenting can result in university student's sense of entitlement and dependency, but it can also affect when students go into the workplace and end up relying too much on others than taking responsibility (Bradley-Geist & Olson-Buchanan, 2014). Power dynamics are an interesting topic and have similarly been discussed in marketing related to psychological contracts (Finch et al., 2015a). Psychological contracts provide parties with spoken and unspoken expectational outcomes, and it has been identified, they can have a dominant focus where workers have expected duties to perform, and there is a sense of dependency for workers (Finch et al., 2015a). This discussion relates to the attitude of interdependency as students are needing to be empowered but can't do this without the push of universities. As identified by participants, students are expected to be empowered and independent when reaching university; however, they need to be pushed now by faculty to reach this state after years of being part of a formal education system that has always guided them. Research indicates that schools are a very influential setting for empowering students (Kirk et al., 2016). University faculty have the opportunity to help students become self-advocates so they can graduate empowered. This theme is linked to relational interdependence, consensus and power.

There is an overarching need for personalization in all aspects of the university experience.

University experts are expressing the need for universities to move away from the transactional "mass" relationship of a university to a more personalized exchange. This need contradicts the emerging funding challenges facing post-secondary institutions. A common message that arose from interviews is the need for more personalized experiences and services. A significant topic that appeared among personalization is identity match needs. Respondents

believed universities must cater to many different student needs and should try to represent many different groups of individuals. The attitude identification can relate to this idea of identity match. Past scholarly research discussed the idea of identification and how it allows individuals to categorize themselves with a group and feel an overlap of one's own beliefs with a group (Balaji et al., 2016; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Wilkins et al., 2016). This raises the importance of being a diversified school and working on impacting students individually, not just as a whole. Students want more personalized experiences and to feel special and a part of something to be satisfied.

One specific aspect of personalization was brought up in interviews related to university programs. It was discussed among participants one program might be chosen over the other due to its applied learning attributes and ability to accommodate student needs. This is connected to the view of scarcity discussed in the literature as it was stated scarcity involves a partner's competitive advantage and whether or not they are seen as having a rare resource (Hamilton et al., 2019; Barney, 1991). The competitive advantage brought up by participants was the need for applied learning and hands-on experiences in programs. The research discusses personalizing programs in the context of online education/MOOC. The literature identifies individuals having many different learning styles, and instruction should be tailored to meet these different needs (Klašnja-Milićević et al., 2011). Personalized e-learning systems are identified as resources that can automatically adapt to match user needs (Klašnja-Milićević et al., 2011). De Freitas and others (2015) similarly discuss MOOCs and that they allow individuals to up-skill themselves in a time of unemployment. Another proposed benefit is helping reduce the cost of higher education, so it is more open for more individuals to learn. However, there are still issues with MOOCs, such as maintaining student retention during the online programs as there are low completion rates (De Freitas et al., 2015).

Personalization can also reflect a desire for a relationship between "people," not an institution, such as student relationships with professors, advisors, peers, alumni. These personal relationships anchor their institutional attitude, e.g. student passes judgement of professors, and together these begin to anchor their evaluation of a school. Customer service literature on hairdressing dives into the social aspect of personalization by discussing communication and customer contact in creating lasting consumer relationships (Garzaniti, 2011). Face to face interactions and the social aspect is identified as important for service organizations, and repeated encounters allow for personal relationships to build. Ultimately, hairdressers providing quality service, communication, and friendship to consumers resulted in long term consumer relationships (Garzaniti, 2011). Research on flight attendant service also dives into the aspect of employee and customer interactions on relationships. Airlines are looking to differentiate their products and services identified service performance as a characteristic of differentiating airlines (Ahn et al., 2015). Consumer's interactions with flight attendants shaped their judgment about the airline based on interactions, personal attention, and effectiveness of solving consumer problems. These interactions with flight attendants can increase passenger satisfaction with their entire airline experience and increase loyalty (Ahn et al., 2015).

Respondents highlighted the importance of creating interpersonal connections with students to personalize the student experience further. Support for students was highly discussed among participants, with 11/12 participants touching on this theme. The discussions surrounded how support shows a positive relationship between a university and its students and how lack of support leads to a negative relationship. Specifically, professor/staff impact and mental health support were brought up. Participants identified the need for professors and staff to give students support. Additionally, if students came back to professors or administrators working at a school,

this was a positive interaction.

The topic of being personable arose a lot among participants. They discussed how face to face contact makes interactions more personable and meaningful to students. Being approachable, trusting, and genuine also surrounded the topic of being personable. If faculty come across as genuinely caring for the students well being and truly were looking to help them, students can tell, and this creates positive relationships. For example, respondent, 2.3, stated: "I think they need to know that, regardless of what institute it is that they care and It's not just another school that's going to give them a piece of paper with a diploma or a degree or other. Yeah, that I think the newer generations are focusing more on collaboration, caringness. How much is that institute going to provide to them?" The literature review defined relationship marketing as a strategy that involves building, maintaining and developing consumer relations (Agariya & Singh, 2011). This is a process that has evolved from being transactional to relational. The need for personalized and relational services identified by participants in the field of higher education shows a shift in the university context to also focus on a relational approach like relationship marketing. Harridge-March and Quinton (2009) discussed how RM looks to maintain loyal relationships and commitment, so each party involved receives benefits. This has been similarly discussed throughout the themes, and now topics regarding relational services have heightened this aspect of building strong relationships. Literature has identified utilizing this relational approach will provide mutual benefit, build long term relationships, create competitive advantages and more (Jones et al., 2015; Beck, Chapman & Palmatier, 2015). For this reason, universities should look to further utilize the relationship marketing approach through personalized services and relational connections to gain value for both students and their institution.

There is a strong need for universities to create an emotional connection with students.

There was an overarching need identified among interviews not only for personalization but also an emotional engagement and relationship-based exchange between the student and university. This was often identified in alumni, loyalty, engagement, commitment and more. Again this identifies the need to move away from a transactional relationship approach. This implication is strongly linked to the topic above surrounding personalization and the social aspect of creating relationships.

Looking at branding literature on the topic of luxury fashion, emotional attachment is seen as a crucial aspect in creating a bond with customers (Theng So et al., 2013). Other research discusses the idea of engagement with customers and how simply creating an event is not enough and organizations must create easy interactions with consumers and co-create experiences and increase consumer connections with an organization (Vivek et al., 2012). Customer experience discussed by Nasermoadeli and others (2013) identify an emotional and social aspect of consumer experiences. Consumers who have an emotional experience with an organization tend to be more invested and committed to the brand, and a social experience creates social communities and a sense of oneself (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). Interviewees identified these concepts of emotional experiences and community. Smaller class sizes were seen as building communities and friendships and were preferred, while large classes can be seen as less favourable. This connects to the drive to have one on one time with professors and classmates in order to gain interpersonal connections with one's university. This might be a competitive advantage of smaller schools or larger schools. An institute might want to consider class sizes and how this impacts the student experience. Even starting at orientations or information sessions, students want to know what the community looks like on campus.

It was discussed by Elkins and others (2011) how building campus communities and getting students engaged would lead to students feeling a sense of belonging. This connects to the results and how this is an essential need for students to feel comfortable on campus. This is a core need of every school and university to strive to create a community on campus. Without this connection to a university, participants identified the relationship will not be good and will most likely lead to students dropping out. The need for community and a greater connection was also identified in alumni. It is valuable to build strong relationships with one student, so they feel a connection to the school and continue giving back even after they graduate. Scholarly research involving alumni engagements similarly supports the need for community long term by discussing how alumni support can be increased through belongingness one feels toward their PSI they had attended which results in financial aid and other benefits (Meer & Rosen, 2009; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Pedro et al., 2018).

The social dimension of creating meaningful relationships is significant. Literature reviewed service experience is casinos as casinos are highly known as experiential activities and are becoming less about gambling (Wong, 2013). It is identified marketing of products is shifting towards a service focus to create value for consumers as customers are starting to seek emotional benefits from organizations (Wong, 2013). This is an interesting dynamic to consider when understanding if students have an emotional attachment to an institution or if they have an emotional attachment with the people at the institution that then emerges as an emotional attachment at an institutional level.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study provides a framework for connecting higher education relational variables to the ultimate value created for students. However, this study has raised more areas for questions for future research.

Additional Themes

Throughout this study, other themes and variables were raised as opportunities for further research. These are themes that did not meet our 50% threshold for reliable results but were raised among participants. Below is a summary of questions that remain:

1. Are mutually beneficial relationships in higher education centred around interdependence? This theme surrounded the idea that a relationship should be mutually beneficial in order to be successful. Participants mentioned the need for both individuals in a relationship to invest time and resources into each other.

2. Is the growth of students in higher education linked to relational value? Respondents identified the growth of students is centred around the belief that if a student is growing then this shows a positive relationship, in order to grow a student must step out of their comfort zone, and university is a time students can discover who they are. The growth of a student again ultimately relates to the value students get out of their time at university.

3. Does the student to university relationship represent a lifecycle? This topic was only specifically brought up by one of the participants. Even though it does not have strength in numbers, it is interesting as it relates to the model and student relationship. This individual saw the student relationship as a lifecycle and discusses the need to measure throughout the entire lifecycle. This theme links to the idea that students

go through a cycle while at university. The student relationship with their university is not linear. That is often why KPI's and measuring student attitudes have appeared as an issue for PSI's because they are usually only capturing students at one point in time.

4. Can admission for higher education impact student perceptions?

Admissions were discussed as an antecedent to attending a university. Admission was said to affect a student's decision to attend university because of factors such as low requirements, how easy and fast the process is to get in, and the information available on admissions. This theme raised the topic of how students are looking for easier entrance into universities. Interestingly, these thoughts were portrayed by individuals working at smaller institutions with easier requirements to be accepted rather than the larger, prestigious university. Therefore, one might consider high admissions could be used as a strategy for larger schools to look even more prestigious.

5. Is access/ease in higher education attached to personalization?

Access and ease is a fascinating topic that arose about how available resources are to students and how easy resources are to receive. Participants discussed this as an antecedent to attending a university. Participants believed if a student found it harder to get access to something at a university, it can lead to a negative relationship. Travel and parking came up as examples of barriers that affect a student's view of how accessible universities are to get to. This topic was related to a convenience issue, and it often impacted students choice to attend a university. This topic further highlights the need for personalization in universities. Students want resources to be made more available to them. If you are a parent, childcare and access are desired. If you drive a car, you want parking spaces. This can relate to students wanting to be heard and understood and have their needs met.

6. Can higher education environments impact student perspectives?

A university's environment arose as an interesting factor. The environment relates to a university vibe on campus and how students perceive the energy on campus. This can be related to how safe the school is, amenities the school provides, and the location of the school relative to an area. This topic was not touched on as a driver in the model, but a participant suggested adding it. The environment could play a role in student attitudes and decisions. This could have an impact on schools and where they decide to locate campuses and what atmosphere they are looking for.

7. How do personal relationships influence institutional attitudes, relative to institutional relationships? E.g. If a student has an awesome experience with professors, but a terrible experience with internal institution processes etc. does the professor relationship moderate their attitude or vice versa?

Quantitative Instrument

Future studies surrounding higher education or organizational value creation should utilize the addition of a quantitative research method. This would allow the constructs of the model to be tested. Originally, the researcher looked to integrate a survey into the study, but time constraints for the project impeded on this work. Creating a survey would allow researchers to investigate the validity and reliability of the conceptual model. This process would operationalize and statistically test the model, so practitioner research in the higher education and stakeholder context can be utilized. As the researcher looked to previously integrate quantitative methods into the study, a proposed instrument and research process has been designed, as discussed below.

We conducted an extensive audit of existing instrumentation and measures of the discrete variables in the conceptual HERMM. During this audit process, we tracked the number of citations

for the related studies that included published instrumentation. Given the time-sensitive nature of citation count (i.e., older articles tend to have higher counts), this was considered when evaluating the different instrumentation. This audit process identified 807 potential instruments for use in developing the preliminary HERMM. Refer to Appendix 1 and 2 for the full audit results.

The next step involved identifying the optimal measure to be used in the associated construct. Citation counts were influential in this process but were not the sole factor in selecting specific measures. In some cases, if instruments possessed contextually relevant measures, but possessed lower citation counts. We gave preference to integrating construct measures in their entirety to maintain their validated psychometric properties. In several instances, we choose to merge measurement constructs from different instruments as part of developing the preliminary instrument. Finally, a series of demographic questions were included to match data collected by a national governing body responsible for gathering population statistical data. The preliminary HERMM instrument is composed of 99 measures (Refer to Appendix 4), and the final HERMM instrument is composed of 126 measures (Refer to Appendix 5).

The first goal of the quantitative research in this context should be to test the psychometric properties of the instruments across a pilot sample of postsecondary students. Therefore, the first step of the instrument design and validation should be to refine the draft instrument through a small pre-test. Following the pre-test, researchers can move to pilot the instrument to analyze the statistical properties of the instrument.

The population of the survey should involve a sample of university students. The goal of a pre-test is to refine the instrument by enabling participants to submit qualitative feedback to highlight poorly worded or unclear questions (Hunt, Sparkman Jr, & Wilcox, 1982). Following the pre-test, researchers should pilot the instrument with a larger sample of university students.

The survey can be administered through web-based data collection, using a self-administered process. Singleton and Straits (2005) define web-based self-administered questionnaires as significantly effective when utilizing a specific population group. Additionally, this data collection procedure is convenient, quick, and cheap. Non-response bias is of less concern for this sample as postsecondary students have access to a public computer. The survey invite should include information on ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Next, data analysis process should conduct an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the measures in the pilot instrument, a confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) test (Hair et al., 2006; Ross, James & Vargas, 2006), Cronbach's alpha test for each composite construct (Valentine, Godkin & Lucero, 2002), and a correlation analysis to evaluate the risk of multicollinearity (Graham, 2003).

Utilizing this survey design and research process will allow future researchers to test the constructs of the model to investigate its validity and reliability further. It will also allow future researchers to gain research on higher education value creation.

Recommendations Summary

Overall, the conceptual model is based on a rigorous study of foundational theories and a wide range of scholarly work. Due to the validity and reliability of this study, the model is believed to be generalizable across other higher education contexts and stakeholder contexts. This study contributes to the scholarly research done on the links between relational value and organizational value creation. Future research should utilize a longitudinal study to see the change in a population over time and their value perceptions. The ultimate goal of this study is to operationalize the links of value creation in the conceptual model to it can be used by future and current scholars to explore the variables of higher education relationships further. Due to the rigour of the methods, practitioners can use this model for further research in this contextual field.

Paper Summary

Today, there has been limited research on the systematic relationship between a student and a PSI in a Canadian context. This study allowed for the contribution of research in the Canadian context so Canadian universities can understand the systematic relationship they have with students. This research will aid PSI in producing mutually beneficial value to students.

Through the rigorous exploration and identification of literature, this research project began by identifying valuable studies that connect to higher education value creation and relationship marketing theories. Using these studies and the Finch, O'Reilly, Hillenbrand, and Abeza (2015) conceptual model a newly adapted model was created for the higher education context, the HERMM. Using phenomenological research methods, 12 interviews were conducted to study the variables in the HERMM. The findings from this research resulted in essential contributions towards the creation of relational value between organizations and stakeholders, more specifically, between students and a PSI.

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Appendix 1

Instrumentation Audit

Higher Education Moderators Audit

Source/Origin	Citations	Construct		# of Items
Ganesan, 1994	8476	1.	Long-term orientation	46 items
		2.	Dependence	
		3.	Trust	
		4.	Environmental Diversity	
		5.	Environmental volatility	
		6.	TSIs	
		7.	Reputation	
		8.	Satisfaction	
		9.	Experience	
Lee et al., 2015	24	1.	Financial bonds	34 items
		2.	Social bonds	
		3.	Structural bonds	
		4.	Utilitarian benefits	
		5.	Satisfaction	
		6.	Intentions to recommend	
		7.	Long-term orientation	
Flint, 1993	89	1.	Sex	14 items
		2.	Race	
		3.	Fathers education	
		4.	Mothers education	
		5.	Family income	
		6.	Number in college	
		7.	First in college	
		8.	Family savings	
		9.	Grants	
		10.	Loans	
		11.	Working	
		12.	Number of institutions	
		13.	Knows institutional admissions rules	
		14.	Degree aspiration	
Kessler et al., 2005	15441	1.	Anxiety Disorders	26 items
		2.	Mood Disorders	

		3. Substance Use Disorders	
		4. Any disorder	
		5. Impulse control disorders	
		6. Marital Status	
		7. Education	
		8. Race/ethnicity	
		9. Sex	
		10. Age at interview	
Baum, & Saunders, 1998	103	1. Borrower debt levels	17 items
		2. Monthly student loan payment-to-income ratios	
		3. Total student loan-debt-to-income ratios	
		4. Burden level attributed to repayment of student loans	
		5. Perceptions of benefits of loans	
		6. Satisfaction that education "invested in" through borrowing was worth it for career opportunities	
		7. Perception of impact of loans on lifestyles	
		8. Distribution of graduate debt levels	
		9. Percentage of borrowers by school type	

Higher Education Mediators

Source/Origin	Citations	Construct	# of Items
Horrigan & Rainie, 2006	129	1. Internet	8 items
Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011	74	1. Trust 2. Commitment 3. Intimacy 4. Identification 5. Reciprocity 6. Attendance intention 7. Media consumption intention 8. Licensed merchandise consumption intention	24 items
Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016	18	1. PSI brand personality 2. PSI brand knowledge 3. PSI brand prestige 4. Student-PSI identification 5. Advocacy intentions 6. Suggestions for PSI improvements 7. Affiliation with PSI 8. Participation for future PSI activities 9. Self-brand connection	31 items
Libbey, 2004	967	1. Positive orientation to school 2. School attachment 3. Attachment to school 4. School bond 5. School bonding 6. School climate 7. School connection 8. School connectedness 9. School context 10. School engagement	168 items
Soutar, & Turner, 2002	584	1. Course Suitability 2. Academic Reputation 3. Job prospects 4. Quality of teaching 5. Campus 6. Atmosphere 7. Type of PSI	20 items

		8. Distance from home		
		9. Family opinion		
		10. Ability to transfer		
		11. Friends		
Chapman & Jackson, 1987	96	1. Admission status		45 items
		2. Portable Scholarships		
		3. College financial aid rewards		
		4. Factors in college choice		
		5. Contacts with PSIs		
		6. Academic bases for scholarships		
		7. Self-reports on change in college choice		
Flint, 1993	89	1. Sex		14 items
		2. Race		
		3. Fathers education		
		4. Mothers education		
		5. Family income		
		6. Number in college		
		7. First in college		
		8. Family savings		
		9. Grants		
		10. Loans		
		11. Working		
		12. Number of institutions		
		13. Knows institutional admissions rules		
		14. Degree aspiration		

Higher Education Behaviours Audit

Source/Origin	Citations	Construct	# of Items
Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016	18	1. PSI brand personality 2. PSI brand knowledge 3. PSI brand prestige 4. Student-PSI identification 5. Advocacy intentions 6. Suggestions for PSI improvements 7. Affiliation with PSI 8. Participation for future PSI activities 9. Self-brand connection	31 items
Tuskej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013	334	1. Consumers identification 2. Affective brand commitment 3. Social compliance brand commitment 4. Positive WOM 5. Value congruity	15 items
Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003	2457	1. Inertia 2. Perceived Value 3. Trust 4. Convenience Motivation 5. Satisfaction 6. E-Loyalty	28 items
Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996	12529	1. Loyalty 2. Switch 3. Pay More 4. External Response 5. Internal Response	13 items
Libbey, 2004	967	1. Positive orientation to school 2. School attachment 3. Attachment to school 4. School bond 5. School bonding 6. School climate 7. School connection 8. School connectedness 9. School context 10. School engagement	168 items

Heere & James, 2007	176	1. Self categorisation 2. Private evaluation 3. Public evaluation 4. Importance 5. Attachment - Interconnection of self 6. Attachment - Sense of interdependence 7. Social embeddedness 8. Behavioural involvement 9. Cognitive awareness	39 items
Stephenson & Yerger, 2014	30	1. Satisfaction 2. Interpretation of brand 3. Prestige 4. Identification 5. Promotion 6. Competition 7. Website 8. Social Media	29 items
Mael & Ashforth, 1992	4934	1. Organizational identification 2. Perceived organizational prestige 3. Perceived organizational competition 4. Perceived intraorganizational competition 5. Sentimentality	36 items
Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011	74	1. Trust 2. Commitment 3. Intimacy 4. Identification 5. Reciprocity 6. Attendance intention 7. Media consumption intention 8. Licensed merchandise consumption intention	24 items

Higher Education Attitudes Audit

Source/Origin	Citations	Construct		# of Items
Mael & Ashforth, 1992	4934	1.	Organizational identification	36 items
		2.	Perceived organizational prestige	
		3.	Perceived organizational competition	
		4.	Perceived intraorganizational competition	
		5.	Sentimentality	
Tuskej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013	334	1.	Consumers identification	15 items
		2.	Affective brand commitment	
		3.	Social compliance brand commitment	
		4.	Positive WOM	
		5.	Value congruity	
Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011	74	1.	Trust	24 items
		2.	Commitment	
		3.	Intimacy	
		4.	Identification	
		5.	Reciprocity	
		6.	Attendance intention	
		7.	Media consumption intention	
		8.	Licensed merchandise consumption intention	
Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003	2457	1.	Inertia	28 items
		2.	Perceived Value	
		3.	Trust	
		4.	Convenience Motivation	
		5.	Satisfaction	
		6.	E-Loyalty	
Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005	159	1.	Attachment to the team	28 items
		2.	Attachment to the sport	
		3.	Attachment to the PSI	
		4.	Attachment to the players	
		5.	Attachment to the level of sport	
		6.	Attachment to the coach	
		7.	BIRGing	
		8.	Satisfaction	
		9.	Conative Loyalty	
Libbey, 2004	967	1.	Positive orientation to school	168 items
		2.	School attachment	

		3.	Attachment to school	
		4.	School bond	
		5.	School bonding	
		6.	School climate	
		7.	School connection	
		8.	School connectedness	
		9.	School context	
		10.	School engagement	
Pampaloni, 2010	155	1.	Organizational image	14 items
Yang, Alessandri, & Kinsey, 2008	68	1.	Relationships quality	51 items
		2.	Reputation	
Morgan & Hunt, 1994	24693	1.	Relationship benefits	47 items
		2.	Relationship termination costs	
		3.	Shared Values	
		4.	Communication	
		5.	Opportunistic behavior	
		6.	Relationship commitment	
		7.	Trust	
		8.	Acquiescence	
		9.	Cooperation	
		10.	Propensity to leave	
		11.	Functional conflict	
		12.	Uncertainty	
Lin, 2010	61	1.	Task effectiveness	22 items
		2.	Knowledge sharing	
		3.	Inter-employee helping	
		4.	Outcome interdependence	
		5.	Expressiveness interdependence	
		6.	Task interdependence	

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Higher Education Antecedents Audit

Source/Origin	Citations	Construct		# of Items
Schlesinger, Cervera, & Perez-Cabanero, 2017	31	1.	PSI Image	18 items
		2.	Satisfaction	
		3.	Shared Values	
		4.	Trust	
		5.	Loyalty	
Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990	3487	1.	Affective attachment	18 items
Morgan & Hunt (1994)	24693	1.	Relationship benefits	47 items
		2.	Relationship termination costs	
		3.	Shared Values	
		4.	Communication	
		5.	Opportunistic behavior	
		6.	Relationship commitment	
		7.	Trust	
		8.	Acquiescence	
		9.	Cooperation	
		10.	Propensity to leave	
		11.	Functional conflict	
		12.	Uncertainty	
Flint, 1993	89	1.	Sex	14 items
		2.	Race	
		3.	Fathers education	
		4.	Mothers education	
		5.	Family income	
		6.	Number in college	
		7.	First in college	
		8.	Family savings	
		9.	Grants	
		10.	Loans	
		11.	Working	
		12.	Number of institutions	
		13.	Knows institutional admissions rules	
		14.	Degree aspiration	
Chapman & Jackson, 1987	96	1.	Admission status	45 items
		2.	Portable Scholarships	

		3. College financial aid rewards	
		4. Factors in college choice	
		5. Contacts with PSIs	
		6. Academic bases for scholarships	
		7. Self-reports on change in college choice	
Soutar & Turner, 2002	584	1. Course Suitability	20 items
		2. Academic Reputation	
		3. Job prospects	
		4. Quality of teaching	
		5. Campus	
		6. Atmosphere	
		7. Type of PSI	
		8. Distance from home	
		9. Family opinion	
		10. Ability to transfer	
		11. Friends	
Fullerton, 2005	397	1. Service quality	17 items
		2. Affective commitment	
		3. Continuance commitment	
		4. Advocacy intentions	
		5. Switching intentions	
		6. Alternative scarcity	

Appendix 2

Higher Education Pilot Instrument (99 items)

Higher Education Pilot Moderators

Construct	# of Items	Measures	Measure Sources
Contextual Factors	2	Dichotomous Checklist	Flint, 1993
	2	Multiple Choice 7pt. Likert Scale	Bau & Saunders, 1998
	2		Kessler et al., 2005
Duration/Intensity	5	7pt. Likert Scale	Ganesan, 1994
	1	Multiple Choice	Flint, 1993

Higher Education Pilot Mediators

Construct	# of Items	Measures	Measure Sources
Media	1	Multiple Choice	Horrigan & Rainie, 2006
	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011
Networks	6	Dichotomous Multiple Choice	Soutar & Turner, 2002
	1		Chapman & Jackson, 1987
	2		Flint, 1993
Event	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016
	2	Dichotomous	Libbey, 2004

Higher Education Pilot Behaviours

Construct	# of Items	Measures	Measure Sources
Advocacy	3	7pt. Likert Scale	Balaji, Roy, & Sadeque, 2016
	2		Tuskej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013
Loyalty	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003
	1		Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996
	2		Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011
Engagement	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Libbey, 2004
	1		Heere & James, 2007
	2		Kim, Trail, & Ko, (2011)
Alumni	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Stephenson & Yerger, 2014
	1		Mael & Ashforth, 1992

Higher Education Pilot Attitudes

Construct	# of Items	Measures	Measure Sources
Identification	6	7pt. Likert Scale	Mael & Ashforth, 1992
Commitment	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Tuskej, Golob, & Podnar, 2013
	2		Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011
	3		Morgan & Hunt, 1994
Trust	3	7pt. Likert Scale	Kim, Trail, & Ko, 2011
	2		Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003
	3		Morgan & Hunt, 1994
Satisfaction	4	7pt. Likert Scale	Anderson & Srinivasan, 2003
	2		Kwon, Trail, & Anderson, 2005
Reputation	1	Self-reported	Pampaloni, 2010
	6	7pt. Likert Scale	Yang, Alessandri, & Kinsey, 2008
Interdependence	4	7pt. Likert Scale	Lin, 2010

Higher Education Pilot Antecedents

Construct	# of Items	Measures	Measure Sources
Social	4	7pt. Likert Scale	Schlesinger, Cervera, & Perez-Cabanero, 2017
	4		Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990
	1		Morgan & Hunt, 1994
Proximity	2	Multiple Choice	Soutar & Turner, 2002
Economic	2	Dichotomous	Chapman & Jackson, 1987
Scarcity	2	7pt. Likert Scale	Fullerton, 2005

Appendix 3

Interview Protocol

Interview Setting

Private location of participant's choice

Interview Method

Questions were designed to be open-ended to provide maximum opportunity for the participant to provide his or her own perceptions and interpretations of the subject under study.

Interview Protocol

Background Questions: Interviewee Expertise

1. Please describe your background as it relates to higher education and in particular an institutions relationship with its students.

2. Do you consider yourself knowledgeable in this area?

3. In your respective area of expertise, can you provide some example of the types of activities in which you would normally engage?

Relationship Value Drivers

1. Think of the diverse students that attend your institution - What motivates or drives them to want to have a relationship with your school?

2. What does your school do specifically to satisfy these drivers?

Relationship Moderating Variables

1. How do you think your students form their initial perceptions about your school? Is it through primarily direct interaction, mass media, or friends and family members? How does this evolve over the tenure of their relationship?

2. What issues do you think most influence your students' perceptions?

Relationship Attitudes

1. How do you define a positive student relationship?

2. How do you define a negative student relationship?

3. How do you define trust with regard to a student relationship?

4. How do you define satisfaction with regard to a student relationship?

5. How do you define commitment with regard to a student relationship?

Relationship Behaviours

1. What are positive things that students could do to impact the outcomes of your school?

2. What are negative things that students could do to impact the outcomes of your school?

3. How do you currently measure this impact?

4. What are some of the key performance indicators of postsecondary education?

5. How do students directly or indirectly influence these key performance indicators?

6. How do you formally or informally measure the relationship between the influence of these students and your school's performance?

7. What are the key challenges of measuring key performance indicators for your school?

Conceptual model feedback

1. To close the interview, I will show you a proposed model that is designed to permit a school to identify the key variables that influence the quality of student relationship while enabling the school to quantitatively link these variables to its performance. Based on our discussion today, please provide your feedback on the applied value of this model as well as some of the challenges that it may face.

Appendix 4

Preliminary HERMM Measures

Advocacy

I will recommend [school] to others

I will post positive comments about [school] on my social media (e.g. Facebook)

I will recommend [school] to those who ask or seek my advice

I transmit my personal experiences with this school also to other people I know

I give advice about this school to people I know

Loyalty

I seldom consider switching to another school

As long as the present service continues, I doubt I would switch schools

Say positive things about [school] to other people

I am likely to purchase [school] 's licensed merchandise in the future

In the future, I intend to purchase licensed merchandise representing [school]

Engagement

I take school seriously

I like being in my school

I like attending games where my school's team is playing

I intend to attend games

The likelihood I will attend a game in the future where my school's team is playing is high

Alumni

Alumni would be proud to have their children attend [school]

I like/would like for people to know that I am an alumni

It is considered prestigious to be an alumnus of the school

Identification

When someone criticizes [school] , it feels like a personal insult

I am very interested in what others think about [school]

When I talk about this school, I usually say "we" rather than "they"

This school's successes are my successes

When someone praises this school, it feels like a personal compliment

If a story in the media criticized the school, I would feel embarrassed

Commitment

I am committed to [school]

I am devoted to [school]

I feel personally satisfied when I attend [school]

I feel rewarded when I attend [school]

The relationship with my school is something I am very committed to

The relationship with my school is something I intend to maintain indefinitely

The relationship with my school deserves my maximum effort to maintain

Trust

I trust [school]

[school] is reliable

I can count on [school]

The performance of [school] meets my expectations

I can trust the performance of [school] to be good

In our relationship, [school] cannot be trusted at times

In our relationship, [school] can be counted on to do what is right

In our relationship, [school] has high integrity

Satisfaction

I am satisfied with my decision to attend [school]

My choice to attend [school] was a wise one

I think I did the right thing by attending [school]

I am unhappy that I attended [school]

I am satisfied with my decision to attend games

I am satisfied with the game experience at [school]

Reputation

What did [school] do to let you know that they are the kind of school that you want to go to?

This school stands behind its education and services

This school has a strong record of growth

I admire and respect this school

This school is committed to athletic excellence

This school offers education and services that are a good value for the tuition

This school maintains high standards in the way it treats people

Media

Thinking about the process you went through as you made an important decision or change, would you say the Internet played a…

a.   crucial role in this

b.   an important role

c.   a minor role

d.   no role at all

I will track the news on [school] through the media (e.g TV, Internet, Radio, etc.)

I will watch or listen to [school] sport games through the media

Network

[school] is:

a.   held in good opinion by my family

b.   is a school of which my family holds no opinion

c.   is held in poor opinion by my family

Family opinion of [school] :

a.   family opinion - good

b.   family opinion - no opinion

c.   family opinion - poor

[school] is where my friends go

[school] is not where my friends go

Friends go to this school

Friends do not go to this school

Did either of your parents attend [school] ?

Fathers education (highest level of education attained by the father):

a.   some high school

b.   high school graduate or GED

c.   some college or vocational school or associate degree

d.   bachelor's degree

e.   graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Mothers education (highest level of education attained by the mother):
a.   some high school
b.   high school graduate or GED
c.   some college or vocational school or associate degree
d.   bachelor's degree
e.   graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Event

I would attend future events being sponsored by [school]

I would attend future functions held by [school]

Do you attend school events after school hours?

Do you attend athletic events after school hours?

Social

The values reflected by this school are consistent with my own personal values

The values reflected by this school reflect the kind of person I am

The values reflected by this school are compatible with things I like

The values reflected by this school are similar to my values

To succeed in this school, it is often necessary to compromise one's ethics

Studying at [school] has a lot of personal meaning for me

I feel a strong sense of belonging to [school]

I feel emotionally attached to [school]

I really feel that any problems faced by [school] are also my problems

Proximity

Distance of [school] from home:

a.   is close to home (less than 10km)

b.   is a moderate distance from home (10-20km)

c.   is far from home (over 20km)

Distance of [school] from home:

a.   distance from home - close

b.   distance from home - moderate

c.   distance from home - far

Economic

Did you apply for financial aid at [school] ?

Have you been awarded any scholarships which you could use at [school] - such as a National Merit Scholarship or one awarded by a corporation or private organization?

Duration/Intensity

I believe over the long run my relationship with [school] will be profitable

Maintaining a long-term relationship with [school] is important to me

[school] is crucial for my future performance

I am willing to make sacrifices to help [school] from time to time

Any concessions I make to help out [school] will even out in the long run

Degree aspiration:

a.   some college or vocational school or associate degree

b.   bachelor's degree (4 year)

c.   graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Contextual Factors

Sex:

a.   F

b.   M

Age at interview:

a.   17-29
b.   30-44
c.   45-59
d.   > 60

Approximate family income:
a.   below $10,000
b. $10,000 to $19,999
c. $20,000 to $29,999
d. $30,000 to $49,999
e.   Over $50,000

Family savings sources planned for school (checklist):
a.   parent's savings
b.   student's savings
c.   gifts from relatives
d.   investments

How important was the availability of education loans in allowing you to continue your education after high school?

Perceived graduate debt:
a.   0
b.   1- 10,000
c.   10,001-20,000
d.   20,001-30,000
e.   30,001-40,000
f.   Over 40,000

Interdependence

My school depends on me for information

My school depends on me for support

When my school succeeds, it works out positively for me

It is advantageous for me when my school succeeds

Scarcity

Aside from [school] there are few choices of schools

I have too few options to switch from [school]

Please rate the following characteristics that may influence your decision to apply (or not to apply) to a school 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= somewhat disagree; 4=neutral; 5= agree somewhat; 6= agree; 7= strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Academic programs/majors offered							
Athletics/sports programs							
Commuter school vs. dorm school							
Cost							
Faculty							
Family member or friend attended school							
Financial aid/scholarship availability							
Groups/organizations/fraternities/sororities							
Housing							
Internship opportunities							
Location							
Religious affiliation							
Reputation							
"Safety" school							

Size							
Social life							
Study abroad program							

a.   Is there something else that you look for in a school that is no included in the list?

Please rate the following characteristics that may influence your decision to apply (or not apply) to a school 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= somewhat disagree; 4= neutral; 5= agree somewhat; 6= agree; 7= strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Campus tour/open house							
College fair							
College guide							
College Websites							
Family member/friend							
High school guidance counsellor							
Interview at the college							
Magazine rankings							
Materials you request from schools							
Unsolicited materials schools send to you							
Recruiters							
Teachers							

Appendix 5

Final HERMM Instrument

For the following questions, please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Please choose from the following answers.

	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Strongly Agree)
I share my personal experiences about MRU to people I know	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I give advice about MRU to people I know	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I seldom consider switching to another school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As long as my current experience continues, I doubt I would switch schools	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I say positive things about MRU to other people	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In the future, I intend to purchase branded MRU merchandise	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I take school seriously	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like being at MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like attending games where	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

MRU teams are playing							
I intend to attend MRU varsity games	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The likelihood I will attend a game in the future when MRU is playing is high	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think MRU alumni are proud to have their children attend MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I graduate, I would like for people to know that I am an MRU alumnus	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is considered prestigious to be an alumnus of MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When someone criticizes MRU, it feels like a personal insult	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am very interested in what others think about MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I talk about MRU, I usually say "we" rather than "they" or "it".	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU's successes are my successes	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When someone praises MRU, it feels like a	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

personal compliment							
If a story in the media criticizing MRU, I would feel embarrassed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am committed to MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied attending MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel rewarded attending MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship with MRU is something I am committed to	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship with MRU is something I intend to maintain indefinitely	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The relationship with MRU deserves my maximum effort to maintain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

For the following questions, please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Please choose from the following answers.

	1 (Strongly Disagree)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Strongly Agree)
I trust MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU is reliable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can count on MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The performance of MRU meets my expectations	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I trust MRU to offer an excellent education	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I trust MRU to be counted on to do what is right	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU has high integrity	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with my decision to attend MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My choice to attend MRU was a wise one	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think I did the right thing by attending MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am unhappy that I attended MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with my decision to attend games	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with the extra-curricular experiences at MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with the educational experience at MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU stands behind its education and services	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I admire and respect MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU is committed to athletic excellence	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU offers education and	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

services that are a good value for the tuition						
MRU maintains high standards in the way it treats people	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU is where my friends go	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU is not where my friends go	○	○	○	○	○	○
My friends go to MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would attend future events being sponsored by MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would attend future functions held by MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○
The values reflected by MRU are consistent with my own personal values	○	○	○	○	○	○
The values reflected by MRU reflect the kind of person I am	○	○	○	○	○	○
The values reflected by MRU are compatible with things I like	○	○	○	○	○	○
The values reflected by MRU are similar to my values	○	○	○	○	○	○
To succeed in MRU, it is often necessary to compromise one's ethics	○	○	○	○	○	○

Note: each row above displays seven ○ response options.

Studying at MRU has a lot of personal meaning for me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a strong sense of belonging to MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel emotionally attached to MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I really feel that any problems faced by MRU are also my problems	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe over the long run my relationship with MRU will be profitable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Maintaining a long-term relationship with MRU is important to me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU is crucial for my future performance	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to make sacrifices to help MRU from time to time	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Any concessions I make to help out MRU will even out in the long run	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU depends on me for information	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
MRU depends on me for support	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is advantageous for me when MRU succeeds	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I have too few options to switch from MRU	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

For the following questions, please indicate "*Not at all Likely"* to "*Extremely Likely"* for each statement. Please choose from the following answers.

	1 (Not at all Likely)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Extremely Likely)
I will recommend MRU to others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will post positive comments about MRU on my social media (e.g. Facebook)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will recommend MRU to those who ask or seek my advice	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am likely to purchase MRU 's licensed merchandise in the future	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will track the news on MRU through the media (e.g. TV, Internet, Radio, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I will watch or listen to MRU sport games through the media	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is "Not at all Likely" and 7 is "Extremely Likely" - please rate the following characteristics that likely influence your decision to apply (or not apply) to a school.

	1 (Not at all Likely)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Extremely Likely)
Campus tour/open house	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
College fair	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

College guide	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
College Websites	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Family member/friend	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
High school guidance counsellor	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interview at the college	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Magazine rankings	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Materials you request from schools	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Unsolicited materials schools send to you	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Recruiters	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 is not important and 7 is very important - how important are each of these factors to you when deciding whether to attend a university?

	1 (Not important at all)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (Very important)
Academic programs/majors offered	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Athletics/sports programs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Commuter school vs. dorm school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cost	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Faculty	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Family member or friend attended school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Financial aid/scholarship availability	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Groups/organizations/fraternities/sororities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Housing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Internship opportunities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Location	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Religious affiliation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reputation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"Safety" school	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Size	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Social life	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Study abroad program	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Is there something else that you look for in a school that is no included in the list?

_____

What did MRU do to let you know that they are the kind of school that you want to go to?

_____

Thinking about the process you went through as you made an important decision or change, would you say the Internet played a…

- o   crucial role in this
- o   an important role
- o   a minor role
- o   no role at all

MRU is:

- o   held in good opinion by my family
- o   is a school of which my family holds no opinion
- o   is held in poor opinion by my family

Family opinion of MRU:

- o   family opinion - good
- o   family opinion - no opinion
- o   family opinion - poor

Did either of your parents attend MRU?

- o   Yes

o No

Fathers education (highest level of education attained by the father):

o some high school

o high school graduate or GED

o some college or vocational school or associate degree

o bachelor's degree

o graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Mothers education (highest level of education attained by the mother):

o some high school

o high school graduate or GED

o some college or vocational school or associate degree

o bachelor's degree

o graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Do you attend school events after school hours?

o Yes

o No

Do you attend athletic events after school hours?

o Yes

o No

What is your postal code?

_____

Distance of MRU from home:

o is close to home (less than 10km)

o is a moderate distance from home (10-20km)

o is far from home (over 20km)

Did you apply for financial aid at MRU?

_____

Have you been awarded any scholarships which you could use at MRU - such as a National Merit Scholarship or one awarded by a corporation or private organization?

_____

Approximate family income (Net):

- o   Below $10,000
- o $10,000 to $19,999
- o $20,000 to $29,999
- o $30,000 to $49,999
- o   Over $50,000

Family savings sources planned/saved for school:

- o   parent's savings
- o   student's savings
- o   gifts from relatives
- o   investments

How important was the availability of education loans in allowing you to continue your education after high school?

_____

Perceived graduate debt:

- o   0
- o   1- 10,000
- o   10,001-20,000
- o   20,001-30,000
- o   30,001-40,000
- o   Over 40,000

Degree aspiration:

- o   some college or vocational school or associate degree
- o   bachelor's degree (4 year)
- o   graduate/professional degree (law, medicine, etc.)

Sex:

- o   Female
- o   Male
- o   Other _____

What year were you born?

_____

What are your ethnic or cultural origins? (you may choose more than one)

- o First Nation/Aboriginal

- o White

- o South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)

- o Chinese

- o Black

- o Filipino

- o Latin American

- o Arab

- o Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)

- o West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan, etc.)

- o Korean

- o Japanese

- o Other _____

Appendix 6

Email Invitation Distributed to Interview Candidates

Dear _____

I would like to invite you to participate in a research project that is to explore the systematic relationship between a student and a postsecondary institution and how this relationship generates mutual value. This research involves conducting interviews with administrators with expertise in the recruitment and success of postsecondary students. These interviews will be exploratory in nature.

As an individual engaged in this area, I would be honoured by your participation. If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a digital audio recorded sixty-minute interview concerning issues related to a postsecondary student relationship with its students'.

This research study has received ethics clearance from the Mount Royal Human Research Ethics Board (HREB). Please see the attached consent form. If you like to participate in this study, please contact me via email at _____ or telephone at (403)_____.

On behalf of our research team, thank you.

Stephanie Ross   Dr. David J. Finch
Bachelor of Business Administration   Associate Professor
Honours Student   Mount Royal University

The Development of a Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model

Project Title: The Development of a Higher Education Relationship Marketing Model

Investigators: David J. Finch, Associate Professor, Mount Royal University; Stephanie Ross, Honours BBA Student, Mount Royal University

Contact Information: David J. Finch email: dfinch@mtroyal.ca; phone: (403) 560-0111

You are being invited to participate in a research project, as described above and in this consent form. Please note this consent form serves to provide an overview of what the research in question is about and what your participation would entail; it is only one part of the consent process. Read this consent form carefully. You should understand the accompanying information. If you have any questions, please ask for help. You will receive a copy of this form.

Study Summary:
You are invited to participate in a study exploring the systematic relationship between a student and a postsecondary institution and how this relationship generates mutual value led by Dr. David J. Finch, a faculty member in the Bissett School of Business at Mount Royal University and his honours student Stephanie Ross.

Participants Involvement:
This research involves conducting expert interviews with sport and sponsorship marketing professionals. These interviews will be exploratory in nature. If you consent to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio-recorded interview concerning the issues associated with exploring issues associated with a postsecondary institutions relationship with their students. The questions will be based on a standardized interview protocol; however, additional questions may be based on the unique response of each participant. The interview will take 60 minutes and can take place at a private location of your choice.

Collection of Personal Information:
We will be collecting personal information including name and background with professional sports. The researchers will secure all recordings under lock. All data will be secured on a hard drive of a MRU computer and password protected. All data (including recordings) will be kept for a minimum of five years after which point all copies will be permanently deleted. Any information you provide will be kept in confidence and no personally identifiable information will be associated with discussion content used in reports of this study. The researchers will not use your information for any purposes outside of this research project. Research records,

including recordings, will be kept in a password protected file and only the principle investigator will have access to these files.

All information collected from the participants of this study will be aggregated, however, direct quotes may be used as examples. All direct quotes will be reported in a manner, so they cannot be attributed to a specific participant or institution. The interviews will not be transcribed, however, if a specific participant quote is extracted, the participant will be sent the quote in advance to review for accuracy. To do so, we will follow the process below:

Step 1: An email will be sent you to with the proposed quote to be used in the study. This email will reconfirm the terms of this consent form, that ensures all identifying information will be removed to ensure confidentiality. You will be provided 14 days to respond, if you have any concerns or requested modifications to the quote. A reminder email will be sent to you at the 7-day mark.

Step 2: Based on feedback received from you, we will revise the quote in the manuscript.

Step 3: If we have not had a response from you, within 14 days of our request, we will proceed with using the anonymous quote in the manuscript.

Your signature on this form indicates that you understand to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in the research project and your agreement to participate.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
The risks associated with this study are small. The most likely loss will be associated with your time invested in this research. All participants involvement will remain concealed and no identifying information will enable a reader to attribute comments to any specific individual.

The benefits of participation will be contribution to a deeper understanding of the emerging needs of sports fans.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether you want to be in the study. If you feel stressed during the interview, you may also stop at any time. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel are too invasive. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time within 90 days of the interview date. You may withdrawal by emailing the principal investigator. If you choose to withdrawal, your contribution (e.g. direct quotes) will not be reported and the audio recording destroyed.

What will happen to the results of this research project?

The results of this study will be developed into academia manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.

Who should I contact if I have concerns regarding ethical issues related to this research project?

If you have any questions concerning your rights as a possible participant in this research, please contact the Research Ethics Officer, at Mount Royal University, 403-440-8470, hreb@mtroyal.ca.

Signature (written consent):

Your signature on this form indicates that you:
- are voluntarily consenting to participate in this research project,
- understand to your satisfaction the information regarding your participation in the research project and your agreement to participate,
- have not yet commenced participation in the research project – your participation will only begin once you have provided your consent, and
- have been given adequate time and opportunity to:
- consider the information provided,
- pose any questions you may have, and
- discuss and consider whether you will participate.

If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact: Dr. David Finch at dfinch@mtroyal.ca or (403) 560-0111.

Participant's Name _____

Signature and Date _____

Principal Investigator/Delegate's Name _____

Signature and Date _____

The Human Research Ethics Board of Mount Royal University has approved this research study. A copy of this consent form has been provided to you for your records and reference.